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To Cut and Cut and Cut Again?

Five weeks ago (NS 29 October) we asked whether there was any limit to the amount of Tory dirty work a Labour government was prepared to do. This week it seems as if there is a strategic majority in cabinet to resist the more grotesque fiats of the IMF – and Mr Callaghan is not a man to defy a strategic majority. Towards the end of the last Labour government, an eleventh-hour revolt forced the abandonment of a suicide course pressed on the party by its dearest enemies. The dormant principles of the movement stirred themselves for a time, and averted the catastrophe of *In Place of Strife.* It was, however, too late to save the government's reputation for firmness or decision: even now there are voices in the cabinet which say that the chosen road must be followed to the end. And the rebels are in a weak position to argue that the road should never have been embarked upon in the first place. Indeed, a dangerous leftist today is a man or woman who dares suggest that only £1,000m. should be cut from social provision and services. The 'moderates' will talk turkey around the £2,000m. mark, while nothing less than £3,000m. will satisfy the Treasury and, by implication, the Tories.

It is not a very admirable spectacle. The whole argument is tactical and marginal – most especially in the case of the Prime Minister. The Conservatives may well turn round and say – as they did over the anti-union proposals in 1969 – that Labour blazed the trail for them. 'Alternative strategists' of any stripe are thin on the ground and weak on solutions. The best that can be said is that the wrong solution is not now being taken for granted. The spirit of utter fatalism which has been permeating politics for the last year seems momentarily to have been challenged. No longer are Tory nostrums – so long discredited that their revival made them seem novel – accepted as common sense; though, as the reception for Professor Friedman's latest hysterical absurdities has made clear, there is some distance to go before we are out of that wood.

The International Monetary Fund is not the one-dimensional machine it is made out to be. It is naturally impressed if British Treasury officials fly to Washington and urge them to wield the knife (and a bouquet in passing to Mr John Pardoe for pointing out some of the blatantly political ways in which they did it). But it knows, or at any rate knows now, that there are experienced people in Britain who ask when the Treasury men last got anything right, and who receive no satisfactory answer. The idea that closing plant and dispersing workforces is an answer to everything has an ancient pedigree, but it has never worked as anything but a primitive means of wage restraint. What is required now is not just a turn away from the brink, but a thorough re-examination of Labour's entire industrial strategy. For nearly three years now, the Government has nervously postponed and attenuated the 'regeneration' plan on which it came to power. It has failed to placate the Tories by doing so, or to make any distinct impression on public opinion. The combination of planning and industrial democracy must now be fought for harder than ever if this week's sudden outbreak of sanity is not to be just another episode in the long decline. All the glib talk about paying ourselves more than we earn is obscuring the crucial argument about restoring industrial productivity and investment. In an open fight, Labour's programme for industrial revival is clearly superior to the Tory one, but it has been occluded by the fog of pseudo-intellectual monetarism.

There seems, however, to be only the slimmest chance that this is what Mr Callaghan intends. He may know when to trim his sails, but he has never been expert at setting or altering a course. Possibly Mr Healey will be called upon to make the supreme sacrifice, and possibly not. But it makes very little difference on its own – though it might relieve Mr Crosland of duties he evidently finds distasteful, such as sticking to Labour's guns on Rhodesia. This week will probably be remembered as the time when some at least of Labour's leadership ceased to be sleepwalkers, but they have woken up too slowly and too late.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

For This Relief, No Thanks

I suppose that in President Bokassa's Central African Republic, when one is saved from being beaten to death with staves, and allowed simply to have one's hands chopped off, there's a great deal of rejoicing the next day in the mud huts of power. 'Ah, Minister Mfoot, so you have seen the dawn too? What did you lose? Mmm, your mmfoot – well, count yourself lucky. I've just seen Minister Mbenn and – ' 'You mean Mtoni is still alive? Well I never did! This calls for a celebration with Mbooth. Good morning, Mbert, I'm afraid I can't shake hands, I've left mine at the palace. What's happened to Mtoni?' 'I don't know, but I'd give my eye teeth to – no, I'll rephrase that – I'd give an arm and a leg to – ow!'

And so forth. Much the same spirit seems to pervade our own cabinet, as the prospect of savage deflationary measures recedes before the prospect of deflationary measures. As I write, the first of the two cabinet meetings is taking place, and the preliminary argument (including a paper from Mtoni on the Alternative Strategy) is being thrashed out. Assuming that these thrashings remain within civilised limits, the cabinet will re-meet/will have re-met on Thursday, and a figure for cuts will be/will have been settled. The Letter of Intent will then be prepared and published before Christmas, and there will be another mini-budget to explain how the intentions are to be carried out. Then we'll all retire into the bosoms of our families and spend a jolly festive season nursing our wounds.

If, like me, you are an avid reader of the *Daily Mail*, you may have been wondering what on earth has been going on. Last week we were told that the cuts had been set at £2,000m., and that Foot and Benn had agreed not to resign. This week, the cuts had not been decided, but eight ministers, including Foot and Benn and Shirley Williams, were on the verge of handing in their notices. Well, as to the first story, a frightfully senior cabinet minister pointed out to me that it was daft, since nobody in their right minds would promise not to resign – it would be asking to be walked all over. As to the second story, the idea that *la* Williams is going to resign on this one (I know she threatened over Europe, I know, I know) is somewhat baroque. (Incidentally, may I take this opportunity to clear up a misconception about a recent piece? I said that Shirley Williams was a shy little azalea, and a reader wrote in to say that she was *not* an azalea. I had only intended to *compare* her in *some respects* to an azalea. I did not intend to imply that she literally was a shrub. I apologise to the reader and to Mrs Williams for any embarrassment caused.)

Any road, what this shows is that the *Daily Mail* is a little short on reliable cabinet leaks. I sympathise. Every week I print my telephone number in the box on this page, but very few ministers seem to take the hint. From those that do, from an extensive network of Whitehall contacts, and with some judicious cribbing from my colleagues, I have arrived at the following historical account of the period:

It was the Age of Terror: everyone was terrified that things had got out of hand. The Chancellor seemed caught in the Treasury web. The Prime Minister, though he was stuck with the Chancellor, was seeking for a way of extricating himself with minimum damage to himself and his colleagues. In the cabinet committees (E-I, E-Y and CNQ) all means were sought to fend off the evil decision. One day, a dusty messenger arrived with the news that the National Institute reinforcements were on the way. If the cabinet could only hold out, they might yet be saved. An eerie silence fell over the government. In the distance they could hear the IMF drums beating, and at night the camp fires of General Whittome flickered on the other side of the plain. Scouts were posted at the head of the valley, to observe the progress of the National Institute Report.

When the report came, there were scenes of jubilation in the Labour camp, but at the meeting of the generals there was an air of sober caution. General Healey was the first to speak: 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'the choice before us is humiliating, but it has to be faced. On the one side, we lie at the mercy of a vast horde of speculators. General Whittome has offered to lend us reinforcements, but as you know his price is steep – perhaps three billion crowns, perhaps we could beat him down. I must emphasise however that the matter is of the utmost urgency. One false move and we could become a breakfast for vultures.'

He finished, and a frightened murmur ran through the camp. Of all the generals in the army, none was more respected than Healey for his courage and honesty. It was said that when he was a child, he had gone and chopped down a cherry tree. Upon his father's discovering the tree, he was challenged as to whether he was responsible. 'Father,' he said, 'I cannot tell a lie. I did not cut down the tree – I readjusted it.'

Then spoke General Crosland, than whom none was more respected for his wisdom and book-learning. He had written a treatise on the art of war, which had been widely praised at the time for its original assumption that defeat was impossible. Everyone was therefore the more eager to hear what he said. 'Comrades,' he began, 'you have heard what General Healey said. For myself, if it were a question of saving our country, none would be more willing than I to pay the price mentioned. However, the question is, do we need the reinforcements of General Whittome? And if we pay his price, wherewithal shall we find money to feed our troops? Let us therefore ignore General Whittome, who, if indeed we are attacked by the vast hordes of speculators, will certainly make forced marches to come to our aid and save us from the enemy's maw. Let us not be panicked into paying a price we can ill afford, for reinforcements that we do not need.'

Many were the generals at that meeting, and many of them had never been called upon to consider matters of such grave import before. They were therefore on their best behaviour and, though they argued with passion and spirit, they did not lose their tempers, nor were their voices raised to such a pitch that the soldiers in the army might hear their counsels. The traditional rivalries were forgotten, and the generals were convinced that no strife in the camp should betray them into the hands of the enemy. General Prentice and General Dell swore oaths of fealty to General Healey, who pointed out that if the reinforcements of Whittome were dismissed in so high-handed a fashion, the speculators would see them leave, and would descend on the camp and work their Bulgarian way with the corpses. Yet there were many others among the generals who saw that if a high price was paid, famine and pestilence must ensue. These wove a number of elegant variations around the themes of Crosland's speech.

The Commander-in-Chief was largely silent, and listened to the deliberations with all the appearance of impartiality. It was clear to him, as it was clear to others, that Healey had been ill-advised, but that the reinforcements could not be simply dismissed. Some kind of gesture had to be made, some earnest of good intentions delivered to Whittome. In the end, a compromise was reached, whereby they would offer to pay a reduced price in instalments – a billion one year, a billion the next, that sort of thing. Healey was dispatched to arrange the diplomacy and to quieten the critics with long speeches of immense complication, laced with hints of better things to come, and blaming the present calamities upon all manner of extraneous causes (such as the weather, the stars, the flights of birds, whatever came into his mind). For the most part, the generals were so glad that they had averted one major catastrophe, that they looked upon the smaller one with equanimity, even affection.

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David Haworth

The Helmut and Jim Show

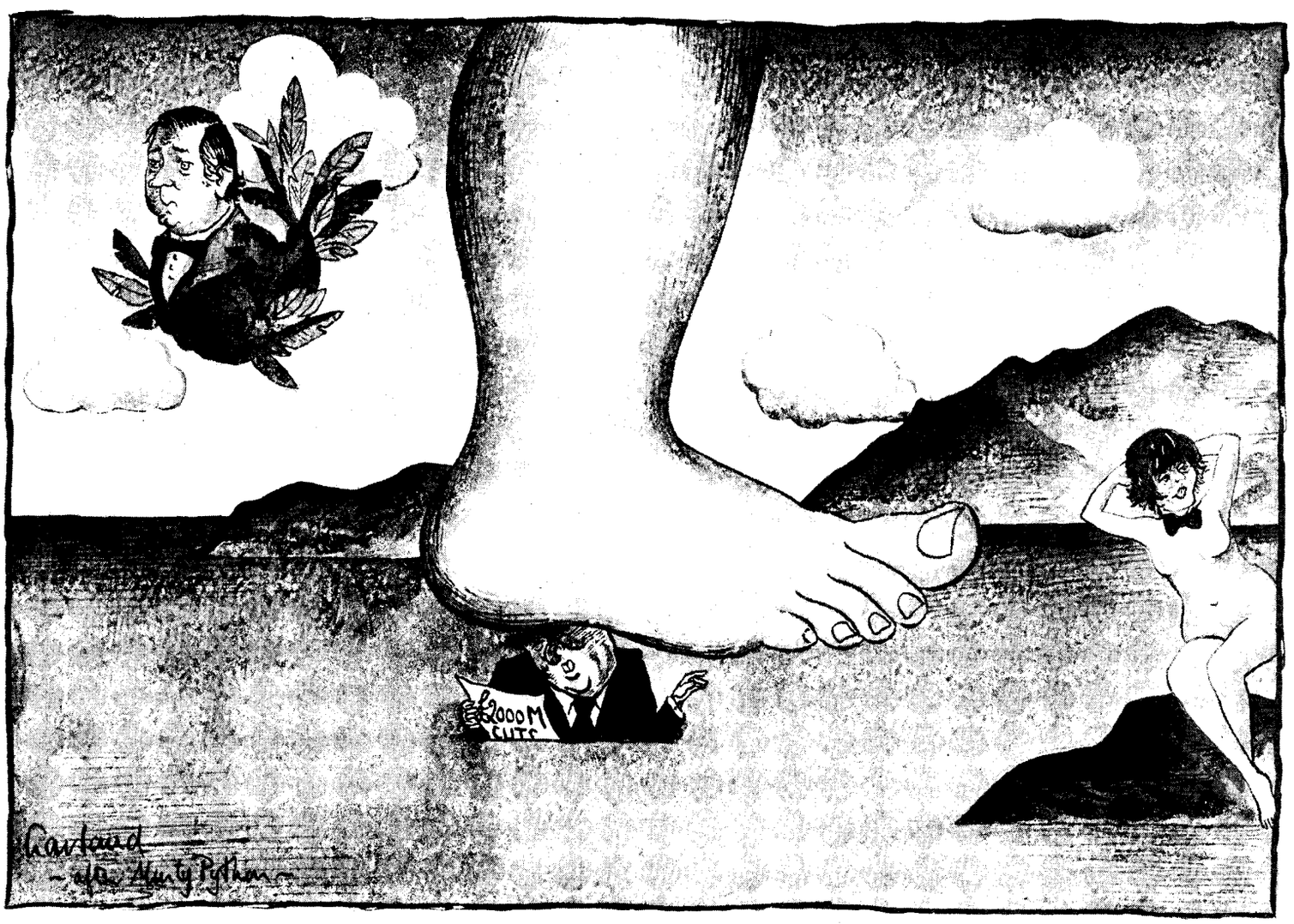
It's a mighty ponderous device, these regular EEC summits, for telling people what they already know and never more so than on this last occasion when it was so sadly clear that nothing of importance could be decided and little of importance would be said. Naturally all the participants claim these get-togethers are useful – how could they not? – and maybe it is, indeed, useful to expose the European Community's impotence, as the meeting here has done, though that is not what the Premiers had in mind.

The lashing sea wind and hard, persistent rain throughout the two days were an apt symbol of the economic environment – the discussion of which dominated these talks. The storm cones have been spinning their angry threat above every Treasury and Finance ministry in the Community for some time now, most especially in London, Rome and Dublin, and in the circumstances there was little the government heads could do but put bricks on the roof, batten the windows and hope the battering will pass without too much damage being done. Though the meeting had all the trappings of a major international event, including an obligatory royal lunch at which Prince Bernhardt made a shy appearance, in reality it was an anxious huddle. Like a board of an unsuccessful company just before meeting the shareholders, the EEC leaders tried this way and that way to put a good complexion on things, but in the end very properly decided to come clean and admit the position is poor and the prospects are worse.

They could do little else. Mr Callaghan is about to be taken to the IMF cleaners and with the inevitable exception of Germany there is not a single robust economy in the EEC. The balance of payments of the deficit countries has increased sharply since the previous Community summit. Consumer demand has slackened, unemployment remained at more or less the same level during the past six months and most industrial production has remained on an unsatisfactory plateau. For all these wrong reasons Mr Callaghan was the star of the show. Apart from an unexpected and ratty intervention by the French President about the £1.3m. subsidy the EEC is providing for British food imports, the Premier was listened to with respect and understanding. It seems all too likely that Britain's plight has powerfully concentrated the minds of other EEC governments.

And the summit was spared on this occasion Chancellor Schmidt's routine homily on good housekeeping. Not that saying something in the wrong place at the wrong time has curbed Schmidt in the past, but what would have been the point on this occasion? Instead there was a working breakfast for the Prime Minister and the Chancellor during which the latter outlined his ambition to supplement aid to Britain in conjunction with other, and not necessarily EEC, countries. It was a ham and cheese breakfast, one official noted, adding cheerfully that the next such occasion might be a bread and water affair.

It is no longer a question of whether Britain is popular or not in the EEC and all the easy Continental references to the British disease are heard no more this side of Tokyo. The question at this summit was whether Britain is shortly to go bankrupt or not. Rightly or wrongly, that is how our predicament is seen from here. It is coupled, of course, with the unspoken acknowledgement that the Community as such has nothing to do with either the cause or the cure of British problems. Certainly this was an occasion for the Community to be cut down to size. It was reminiscent in some ways of



'And now for something completely different . . .'

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the Copenhagen summit three years ago which was hi-jacked by the Arabs and had the EEC foreign ministers scampering about like panic-stricken stewards. The absence of Opec representatives made this summit less dramatic, but the imminent prospect of a further oil price rise, with all that that implies, did not make their existence any less real. Now, as then, the Community is deeply divided about the best way to confront the Opec countries. Chancellor Schmidt told Mr Callaghan – over that breakfast as it happened – that he favours a clear link being made between an oil price rise and the fate of the so-called North-South dialogue which will soon be resumed. He wants the developing world to be told the industrialised countries will do what they can to help, but only in so far as they are able to after the next Opec meeting. This has the merit of realism and the Prime Minister sympathised. But for the French such an approach seems riskily abrasive. They could be right.

I suppose it's inevitable that Schmidt's importance at these gatherings increases in direct proportion to the difficulties other partner countries are in. There is the ritual deference to all nine points of view, but anything the German Chancellor says in the conference room or outside it has a special weight. He's aware of this and not always happy about it. But it is a fact that if any of the others want a decision from Bonn – on whatever issue – the best way of achieving one is to make sure the dossier lands on the Chancellor's desk. Had he been less prudent this time, Schmidt could have made things very uncomfortable for Callaghan. Whatever his private view may be about sloppy economics in Britain, he is totally convinced there is no point in squeezing Britain with an usurer's stranglehold. It was this conviction of Schmidt's, and his expression of it, which made Giscard's attack seem gratuitous, ill-timed.

Doubtless the French President has a good point in logic. For 25 per cent of the EEC's expenditure to go on the maintenance of the 'green' currencies is unquestionably a weird distortion of what the Common Market is supposed to be. But such costs are, alas, going to be a feature of the EEC during the foreseeable future. French farmers also benefit from the system, it should be pointed out, and what possible alternative does the Prime Minister have but to insist yet again that Britain is not ready to devalue the green pound? To do so, he added, would be to finish off the social contract.

That's a fair assessment and was a conclusive debating point at the meeting. However, since we still can talk about a Community, a status quo in green currency rates does impose special hardship on another partner country whose economic problems are also critical – namely, Ireland. The distortion will cost the Irish some £35m. net this year. If the present rates are maintained next, the net cost to Dublin will be between £120m. and £150m. To a predominantly agricultural economy with an inflation rate higher than Britain's these are figures which transform the problem from an agricultural one to one of vital economic importance. It is even possible at this rate for Ireland to become a net contributor to the EEC – which is not just a nightmare but could be a tragedy.

So much, then, for the Common Agricultural Policy, once the proud and only real token of EEC cohesion. Here, as in every other aspect of the Community, the short-term problems are not being solved because the long-term ones are so intractable. In so far as anything was decided, the Prime Ministers agreed to deal gently with Japan in the coming months – surprising in view of the recent indignant cries from both the European Commission and London about remorseless Japanese trade practices. Or perhaps it wasn't so surprising: the Japanese will be expected to row in with whatever international schemes are launched to rescue Britain. Relations between Brussels and Tokyo cannot be allowed to get too sour. In any case, the US would be affected if hostilities degenerated into something approaching a trade war. Goodness knows how this summit appeared from the perspective of Plains, Georgia, but there was no lack of speculation about that among gloomy officials in the corridors. Waiting for Jimmy? said someone. You could say that, but it seems more a case of waiting for Godot.

The Hague

Neal Ascherson

Devolution and Dependence

The Scotland and Wales Bill is out at last, and nobody seems to like it much. Parliamentarians, like trawlermen contemplating a fouled and knotted net on the deck, stare morosely at this mass of intricate, bureaucratic verbiage which now blocks the floor of the House. The Scots have been as sleetily ungrateful as they usually are for plans devised in London. The Welsh growl, perhaps more at each other than at the English.

The great Bill is a gloomy read. It has 168 pages and 16 Schedules. Most of its sentences must be conned twice to discern their meaning. In the old days, constitutional bills were something else. The Treaty of Union is a mad, erratic document but it does have style. Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill ran to a few pages of Doric simplicity: it told the Irish Parliament what it was not allowed to do (much was made of the Queen's monopoly of Honours), and left it to imagine all the rest. It was a steep literary challenge to put together 168 pages on the most sweeping constitutional change Britain has approached in two centuries without displaying one spark of emotion, one flash of excitement or one glimmer of enthusiasm. But it is a challenge to which our Government has risen. This is the most boring Bill I have ever read.

And yet, in a way, it is a very convincing Bill. If it really is so complex to divide the power which central government has accumulated in the last few decades, then it is clearly the sort of power which ought to be divided while that still remains possible. As it is, the Bill binds the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies with a thousand threads, many of which the White Paper of 1975 and this year's supplementary statement on devolution did not anticipate.

Threads? Some are straps. The most surprising part of this otherwise unsurprising text is the way that the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales have been restored as actively vice-regal figures. Take the 'policy veto' – the power to overrule Scottish or Welsh legislation not because it oversteps the Bill's allocation of fields but because the Westminster Government does not fancy it. In the 1975 White Paper this was boldly stated, and met a roar of protest about the Secretaries of State being kitted up as 'Governors-General'. This roar impressed the Government. In May this year, Michael Foot produced a smoother formulation: Parliament would be entitled to intervene if an Assembly passed a Bill which had 'unacceptable repercussions' in areas reserved to Westminster. Now, however, we are back towards the hard line. The Bill adopts the phrase 'in the public interest': if he thinks that an Assembly bill affects 'directly or indirectly' a Westminster area in a manner not in the public interest, then a Secretary of State can ask Parliament to annul that bill.

He can veto such a law before asking Parliament's permission, if it concerns relations with the European Community. He has total power to cancel planning decisions which – like bills – may affect a non-devolved area in ways contrary to that public interest, and the Assemblies are

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forbidden to appeal against his intervention. And the wording of the Bill does suggest that it will be the Secretaries of State who will negotiate with the Treasury about the size of the annual block grants which will finance the two Assemblies.

This would be ominous. It is easy to take the point: the Government hates the idea of a grand annual haggle at which Scottish and Welsh ministers will arrive at the Treasury with a retinue of their own journalists and stage a great political drama out of their demands and Whitehall's reluctances. Still less would this Government – or, to be fair, the Treasury – fancy the prospect of a public negotiation on the block grant conducted by an impartial Exchequer Board, like that suggested by the Kilbrandon Report. No, direct contact between the Assemblies and the Treasury must be prevented: the Secretaries of State will go to London on behalf of the Scots and the Welsh. If this is what the Bill is really trying to say, I do not think it will work. After all, argument about how much money the sub-parliaments will get is going to be the central political relationship in a devolved Britain.

For Scotland, at least, the Bill is far behind public opinion. Most Scots do not want to break up the United Kingdom, but they do consider that an Assembly without real power over the economy is almost pointless. As everyone foresaw, the Government – still plaintively appealing for ideas – failed to crack Treasury resistance to giving the Assemblies power to tax. A sales tax would have run foul of EEC fiscal policy, while local income tax was rejected because the Layfield Report said that it would cost too much to find out where people lived for collection purposes (the Report was talking about the local domiciles: finding out whether people lived in England, Scotland or Wales would actually be far easier and cheaper). A web of petty restriction covers what economic powers would be devolved. 'Guidelines' established in London confine what the Assemblies can do. The Whitehall doctrine that Britain can only be managed as a single demand area scents every page. No direct share of oil revenue, no proportional representation for Assembly elections, no devolution of the universities, but – a lonely item in the unexpected goodies list – the Scottish Assembly's committees will be able to help draft legislation as well as to discuss bills. This is an innovation, a token that the Assemblies will be experimental.

But, in the end, the Bill is creating dependence more than it is lessening it. This sounds ironic. But a form of devolution so elaborately qualified will bring to life tribes of new representatives and officials whose days will be spent tripping over London's leading-strings and swearing at them. A unitary system and a federal one both have comprehensible architecture. This Bill, in contrast, is confused and provocative like an unloved child. Nobody in the Government wanted it, and nobody with commanding imagination or affection was allowed to form its character.

What would Swift have thought about Lilliputians who covered Gulliver with itching powder before trying to thread him to the ground? But then Swift – always useful about the British tribal confederation – never thought the Union would work. 'Divided hearts, united states' would create a rising tide of Anglo-Scottish squabble until

> '. . . tossing faction shall o'erwhelm
> Our crazy, double-bottom'd Realm.'

Make it triple-bottom'd, to take in Wales, and we may leave the rest to this Bill.

Peter Hillmore

When the Boat Comes In

God give us higher oil prices – but not just yet. This must be the kind of anxious litany that Mr Callaghan is adding to his regular economic prayers, as Sheikh Yamani and his colleagues study their bank statements in preparation for the crucial Opec meeting on 17 December. While Britain is currently echoing the desperate American warnings about the dire effects of higher oil prices – witness Mr Callaghan's speech at the Lord Mayor's banquet – it will not be all that long before we will be standing outside the Opec stadium in Vienna like frantic football supporters urging the oil team on to still higher financial scores.

It is, of course, North Sea oil that will change our attitude and our tune. It has long been a salutary and obvious political and economic cliché that the arrival of North Sea oil in large quantities is not going to solve all our problems at a stroke (the oil won't last forever, etc.). But this sensible caution has also managed to make us seemingly insensible to quite how big a difference it will make. The oil couldn't have come at a better time, except perhaps a few years earlier. The National Institute belatedly realised this last week when its welcome arguments against too much conservative deflation from the Labour Government took into account just how much we will save on the balance of payments next year, now that the oil boat is coming in.

The financial benefits of North Sea oil to the economy are already hugely apparent, even though the much heralded era of self-sufficiency is some years off. This year alone the positive benefit to the overall balance of payments (and this is after deduction of imports related to oil developments and the repayment of foreign interest loans) will be in the order of £1,365m. This figure, moreover, will climb to at least £2,000m. next year and will steadily rise to the dizzying heights of 1980, when the cumulative total will reach nearly £15,000m. (These savings are calculated on the present price of oil – the benefits will be greater if the Opec countries raise the price of their oil, and along with it the value of ours.)

For this relief, much thanks. But Mr Callaghan is still right to worry what Opec will do when they meet in Abu Dhabi in a few weeks' time. The rate of production from the North Sea is climbing all the time, and at a much faster rate than was anticipated, but the blunt fact remains that next year we will still have to import more than half our oil requirements. Beyond that, any chance of an early export-led recovery in Britain depends on growing economies in the rest of the world, and a higher oil price will inevitably set this back. It has been estimated that even a 'modest' 10 per cent Opec increase will add over £6,500m. to the West's oil bill. The reassuring fact remains, however, that if Opec remains insensitive to the pleas of the consumers, then North Sea oil will at least soften the blow somewhat for Britain.

To make matters better, this is not the only blow that will be softened. The Government will not only save money from North Sea oil, it will also make some. The triumvirate of taxes – royalty, corporation and the special Petroleum Revenue Tax – will bring money into the Exchequer. At present while the oil companies are still writing off the capital expenditure on the field, only royalty revenue is coming in (about £105m. this year), but the total rises when the other taxes become effective – in 1978 the revenue should be about £2,000m. (at present oil prices). On top of that there is the potential revenue from the state's 51 per cent participation stake through the British National Oil Corporation, as well as the British Gas Corporation.

So, from all this it is clear that it is not just the *Observer* that regards the international oil companies as the cavalry surging over the horizon to the rescue in the nick of time. But exactly how grateful should we be to the brave kids from the regiments of British Petroleum, Shell, Atlantic Richfield and the rest?

According to a study* published last weekend, not all that much. Professor Peter Odell (who, along with Lord Balogh devised a new North Sea strategy for the Labour government as far back as 1964, only to have it squashed by Minister of Power, Richard Marsh) argues that the international oil companies have failed to exploit the full potential of the North Sea, in order to maximise their profits.

Put simply, his highly complex and closely argued thesis is this: the oil companies make high profits per barrel of oil from the Middle East because the artificial tax element in the cost of Opec oil gives them huge tax credits to offset against their profits. British Petroleum, for example, pays no corporation tax on its profit figures. As a result, there is less inclination on the part of the companies to upset traditional patterns of oil supply. Added to this is the fact that oil from the North Sea, either from Norway or the UK sector, is liable

* **Optimal Development of the North Sea's Oil Fields** by PETER R. ODELL and KENNETH E. ROSING *Kogan Page* £28.00

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to both a petroleum tax and normal corporation tax. As a result, the oil companies have gone all out for a quick (in oil terms) profit, rather than develop the North Sea oil fields to their full oil-producing potential. On the giant BP Forties field, for example, Professor Odell argues that, had BP initially decided to put six oil platforms on the field instead of four, an extra 200 million barrels (about 10 per cent) could have been obtained from this one field. The study estimates that the 'loss' to the British economy in 1980 by the investment decisions of the oil companies in the 'non-maximal decisions in developing the fields could be of the order of $3.500m, in foreign exchange terms and $1,800m. in terms of government revenues – the significance of either of which to the UK economy can hardly be overstated'.

Professor Odell does not particularly blame the oil companies – they are, after all, in the oil business to keep shareholders happy. And, paradoxically, while the men from the Treasury might read the part of the report dealing with lost revenues ruefully, the Department of Energy will be very pleased. When Lord Balogh was touting the benefits of setting up the British National Oil Corporation, one of his main arguments was that the 51 per cent participation stake and seats on the board would give the state both technical expertise and a say in the development programme.

Peter Wilby

Engineering For Survival

In our efforts to solve our economic ills, we are like a man with a fruit machine, trying the various combinations with increasing desperation. Planning, new technology, more investment, industrial relations reform – they've all been tried, and didn't work, or couldn't be made to work. Now, what about engineering? The Prime Minister has talked about it recently, and Prince Philip is always talking about it. Are more engineers and better engineers the key to the regeneration of British industry?

It comes as no great surprise that the evidence on which a judgment could be formed is inadequate. The Government used to carry out a triennial survey of the employment of qualified scientists and engineers but, for no obvious reason, it was stopped in 1968. The general consensus in industry is that it is easier to find the right kinds of scientists than to find the right engineers and technologists. In Europe the proportion of graduate technologists to graduate scientists is about three-to-one. In Britain it is nearer one-to-one.

There is an important distinction, obscured by our curious national habit of referring to 'applied' and 'pure' sciences, as if the engineer's job, of its nature, involved some sort of impurity. Put very crudely, the scientist takes things apart, the engineer puts them together. While the scientist is concerned with truth, the engineer is concerned with utility. And producing useful, well-designed things, which people want and which they can afford, is just what British industry, by all accounts, is not good at.

Science, it has been remarked, is the engineer's housemaid and one should never allow oneself to be seduced by the housemaid. But most British university engineering courses borrow the academic orientation of the science faculties. They do not teach engineering practice – the designing, making, marketing and managing which ensure that products are economic, usable, reliable and safe. That is in sharp contrast to the custom on the Continent where, particularly in Germany and France, high-status practical engineering schools were established by the state in the last century. A. V. Chisholm, professor of mechanical engineering at Salford University, reported to a Cambridge conference this year:

> There is much less emphasis on experimental work . . . and more emphasis on practical work than in British courses . . . the values and aims which [the] British emphasis on academic standards demonstrates appears to be irrelevant to Continental engineering teaching . . . in most Continental countries it is still considered almost essential to have for the teaching of the engineering practice in the senior parts of the courses professors who have actually practised as senior engineers and been responsible for engineering works. These engineer-professors have had effective control of academic policy, unfettered by the possibly different aims and values of other academic disciplines.

The education of British university engineers means that they are no more anxious to enter industry than industry is to employ them. They dislike dirt, noise and industrial relations problems. They can discuss engineering science with their intellectual peers but they have no idea (even though British higher education is supposed to be good at teaching 'communication') of how to talk to the wide variety of people they will meet in industry. Still less do they know how to read a profit and loss account. Barely half the engineering first degree graduates supplied by the universities go into industry. And, of these, barely a quarter go into production. The polytechnics are supposed to come nearer to industry's requirements and to Continental models but, alas, their graduates are no more likely than the universities' to enter industry in general or production in particular.

Employers, however, must take their share of the blame. They complain that one reason why they can't attract enough able graduates is that public corporations, local authorities, central government and universities all offer them higher salaries. True enough. But, even within industry, the engineer is likely to get less money and fewer prospects than the smooth-talking law graduate or the whizz-kid accountant. Production is the worst paid of all industrial sectors and the least likely to lead to top management jobs. Employers encourage their brightest graduate recruits to enter research, design and development, under the erroneous impression that once they've passed 30, their creativity will dry up. After five years' inventing new black boxes, the graduates have an outdated general education and no experience of the shop floor. But, by then, they're thought to be ready for promotion. So a new generation of British management is created, lacking, even if it has professional engineering qualifications, the most rudimentary understanding of who the workers are and what they make.

It is a reminder that British industry is still riddled by snobbery and status considerations which have permeated our culture so deeply that, at this late stage, it may prove impossible to extirpate them. The engineer's lack of status in this country is at the heart of our industrial problems. In the public mind, he is a plodding, unimaginative creature, with a gruff manner and a greasy spanner. He has less esteem than a lawyer, doctor, architect, accountant, even a journalist. (On the Continent, an engineer is frequently addressed as 'Engineer' much as a medical man is addressed as 'Doctor'.) Most people have heard of the Inns of Court or of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. Few have heard of the Council of Engineering Institutions; it was formed only a decade ago and, until then, engineers were fragmented into some 50 different societies. This year, a Fellowship of Engineers is being formed – nearly 300 years after the scientists formed their Royal Society.

All this helps to explain why clever people prefer not to become engineers or, if they do, they prefer to call themselves researchers or managers or designers. The chain stretches right back from industry through the universities and polytechnics to the schools, which send their less able pupils on to engineering courses. We *are* short of engineers, then, but it is a shortage of quality as much as quantity, and what quality we have, we misuse. We can all take a share of the blame – even journalists who fail to write about engineers with the same reverence as they write about doctors or lawyers.

Some employers and universities are developing encouraging ideas for improving engineering education – notably the teaching company, which would provide for the engineering school what the teaching hospital provides for the medical school. Yet the status problem, rooted in 100 years of British history, which concerned Queen Victoria's consort as it concerns Queen Elizabeth II's, may take generations to solve. Current recruitment literature tries to uplift the engineer's status by portraying him as an executive with a tidy desk, an air-conditioned office and a sleekly-designed telephone. At best, this will simply confuse young people. Somehow, there seems to be no way you can convince the British that anything intellectually stimulating or socially respectable can be done with a capstan lathe. Perhaps we should forget the whole thing and resign ourselves to being a sort of high-minded, cultivated Arcadia.

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For three Sundays in December

Laurence Olivier

PRESENTS

The Best Play of the Year 19—

Alan Bates, Malcolm McDowell, Helen Mirren & Laurence Olivier

in

The Best Play of the Year 1960

THE COLLECTION

by Harold Pinter

A study of four elegant and fashionable lives suddenly threatened when their brittle world is shaken by the tremors of an obsessive jealousy.

Produced by Laurence Olivier and Derek Granger
Directed by Michael Apted

ITV SUNDAY 5 DECEMBER AT 9 pm

---

12 December at 9 pm The Best Play of the Year 1955

Natalie Wood, Robert Wagner, Maureen Stapleton & Laurence Olivier in

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

by Tennessee Williams

The Pulitzer Prize-winner of 1955, this drama of the Deep South tells of a last birthday party which becomes a night of desperate revelation.

---

19 December at 9 pm The Best Play of the Year 1912

Donald Pleasence, Rosemary Leach, Jack Hedley, Pat Heywood & Roy Dotrice in

HINDLE WAKES

by Stanley Houghton

The famous Manchester comedy about a mill-girl of 1912 who decides to defy convention and strike a blow for women's liberation.

GRANADA TELEVISION

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Jonathan Dimbleby

The Lesson of Lebanon

At the Commodore bar in Beirut, beleagured reporters comforted each other's fear: *this* was worse than Vietnam. More vicious, more dangerous, and less likely to appear on the front page. The trouble, as veterans of the conflict would remind us, was that no one wished to understand it until too late. It is not hard now to take the simple line: the peace-keepers from Syria are in control, the troublesome Palestinians have been brought to heel, and the prospect for peace in the Middle East has never looked brighter.

But then it was pretty simple a year ago as well – though then the Lebanon was only a sideshow. Then there were severed heads in the streets, castrated children, random shells, innocents massacred, and all of it (you will recall) in the name of competing Gods. It was the Christians against the Muslims. Poor old Beirut, we murmured, and were consoled by the thought that the insanity was but a local affair.

Yet by January this year, after nine months of civil war, some 30,000 Lebanese were dead or wounded. Each bout of fighting, interrupted by ever more shaky ceasefires, was worse than the one before. The Lebanon, a western jewel in Araby, was in chaos, held in thrall by atavistic urges beyond the comprehension of civilised man. Or so we chose to believe.

Then Assad, the taciturn President of Syria, muttered – and the world woke up. What if Syria intervened? And then Israel? And then . . .? War in the Middle East? Suddenly the Lebanon mattered. The conflict was less simple than we had chosen to think.

For a start, it was discovered that the Christian side contained a disproportionate number of financiers and industrialists who claimed no special allegiance to the Almighty. They were, however, most anxious to impress upon you that 'their' fighters – unlike the 'riff-raff' on the other side – were a good class of person. And if some of them were a trifle embarrassed by the zeal of the Phalange Party (whose troops like to dress in black and prefer the goose-step), they recognised that fascism was good for wartime discipline. Then, again, it should be made clear that most of them had nothing against Muslims; indeed many of them had close Muslim friends. And they had recruited Muslim support, until their Phalangist associates had forbidden it – but then, they apologised, 'fascism's like that'. A minor detail when the soul of the Lebanon is at stake.

That the soul of the Lebanon was profoundly rotten did not greatly concern them. That behind the gaudy façade of Beirut there was hidden a grotesquely perverted social order that deprived most of the people of dignity and kept them in poverty, was a matter of no moment. For the Lebanon was fashioned in their likeness, by them, for themselves. Their constitution (drawn up by the French to preserve the Lebanon from the Arab hordes) guaranteed permanent supremacy to the Christians, even when, (as had become the case by the Sixties), the Muslims were in the majority. Protected by the outward forms of democracy, but unconstrained by its principles, Lebanon's ruling elite gave over their lives to the unrestrained pursuit of power, money and pleasure. They soon made friends. The capitalists of the West, eager to identify economic licence with political democracy, descended upon Beirut to transform it into the counting-house of the Middle East.

This intimate and lucrative alliance between Christianity and capitalism would doubtless have prospered for all time but for the fact that most of the people were not permitted to share in its fruits. Some of them began to murmur against their masters, and when it was evident that their voice would remain unheard, a few even prepared to take up arms.

Not that they asked for much. Though some of them were communists, and more owed allegiance to various strands of socialism, their undisputed leader Kamal Jumblatt (the feudal lord of the Druze community) is as wedded to social democracy as Roy Jenkins, though somewhat more conservative. His agitation had been for little more than the replacement of the confessional by a secular constitution which would have given some point of universal suffrage. It was too much for the old elite who saw in it the demise of their Lebanon.

The war would still have been quite simple (and certainly brief) if the future of the Lebanon had been only the concern of the Lebanese. But – a fact which more people should have recorded much earlier – the Lebanese conflict was never just a civil war. The Americans, the Israelis, and the rest of the Arab world well knew what had caused the war, and who were its intended victims.

The Palestinians could not have been greatly surprised by the course of events either, since it fitted, with perfect inevitability, the logic of the predicament imposed upon them by their Arab brothers. In the Arab world there is no cause more vociferously championed or more carefully manipulated than that of the Palestinians. They have been courted and jilted by so many with such promiscuous regularity, that they have long since discarded any illusions about the honour of those who jostle for power and pre-eminence in the Middle East. Such perfidy, however, has quite failed to still the obsessive – if inconvenient – urge of the Palestinians to return to their homeland.

By 1975, there were upwards of 400,000 Palestinians in Lebanon, most of them enduring that indignity imposed upon the stateless – that eloquent rebuke to history which is the refugee camp. The Lebanese authorities had long since discarded the pity with which they had welcomed the first refugees in 1948. They regarded the new wave, those who fled to Lebanon from King Hussein's onslaught in 1970, with positive distaste. The Palestinians were Trouble. Licensed by other Arab states to wage guerrilla war against Israel from Lebanon, they invited Israeli blitzkreigs in retaliation – and got them. In the last few years much of south Lebanon has become a no-man's land, as peasants in their thousands evacuated their homes for the comparative security of Beirut.

Just as bad, the Palestinians refused to behave like refugees, displayed none of that deference which the Lebanese would call tact, and exhibited a degree of self-confidence that those who would be their patrons took for arrogance. Worse, they proclaimed the dreadful language of revolution in a state whose leaders were dedicated to the rhetoric of reaction. It was thus natural and inevitable that the Palestinians should find themselves drawn into alliance with a Left which championed their cause against a Right which was set upon its destruction.

To recall the start of the war is to hack back through images of savagery to the month of March 1975. It matters not a jot whose was the final provocation – though there will surely be more argument about that than the depravity it unleashed. However, though no one saw fit to ask them at the time, the Christians would later acknowledge freely that they had been after the Palestinians all along, that there had to be a final showdown.

Whether they were egged on by the CIA (as is plausibly alleged by an Agency defector); or already had the secret but invaluable support of Israel; or private assurances that no important Arab power would stand in their way; or whether they pressed on from hot-headed hatred – whatever the case, they were uncommonly calm in the face of defeat one year later. Forced into a coastal enclave, surrounded by the enemy, they serenely called upon the Western world to save Lebanon from the communist hordes – and then uttered the final threat: 'Partition'.

Pavlov would have been delighted. The word echoed round the Middle East. Every diplomatic face looked studiously alarmed. And to no one's surprise – but in an atmosphere of carefully stage-managed high drama – the Syrians at last made their move. What would Israel do? And America? The Palestinians had no doubts: both would growl, neither would bite.

It is important to remember – because it is tempting to forget – that Syria's sole concern throughout the last nine months has been to keep the peace (if in doubt check with Damascus newspeak). Moreover, for most of this year, the Syrian Army has not even been in Lebanon. Indeed so absolute has been its absence that those photographers who wished to record its presence were advised not to put the camera to the eye: there is no warning more convincing than that of an absent soldier of an invisible army holding a non-existent gun.

Anyway, the Syrians dug their tanks deep into Lebanon and the war got even

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bloodier. A thousand people, most of them civilians, were killed in one weekend. Confessional murders still bore hideous witness to the savagery of man. The streets were race-tracks for the dispossessed, wild youths in Land Rovers, murderous children toting guns they could barely lift. And still, in the rubble of the city centre, each pounded away at the other on what was now the 'traditional' front line: no advance, no retreat. A murderous stalemate.

And the Syrians, instead of stopping it, watched and waited. Why? The answer is simple if crude: they did not want peace but surrender. The only coherent explanation for Syria's conduct of a war in which the death-toll more than doubled from the moment of her invasion to the final ceasefire is that Assad required the PLO on a platter, without staining his hands with the blood that condemned Hussein.

The Palestinians, knowing the Syrian need, moved to confront their old ally, and started to lose the war. What did the Syrians want with the PLO? There is a tortuous logic to the drama which makes the assumption (which many made too late) that, so far from being a sideshow, most of the misery of the last 18 months has been the carefully scripted final act of the vicious tragedy of the Middle East.

It is said that Henry Kissinger told Israel to take a holiday for the duration of the Lebanese war (and one of his closest advisers told me that the war had been an important 'breathing space'). It is a measure of Kissinger's diplomacy that America, alone of the great powers, now arbitrates in the Middle East. If he is ever shadowed by guilt, then Henry Kissinger's conscience might one day twitch at the memory of Lebanon's carnage. Step-by-step diplomacy in the Middle East: do a deal with Sadat that Assad thinks a sell-out; create renewed enmity between Syria and Egypt; continue to deny that the PLO exists (treat Arafat as a figment of the UN's imagination, olive branch and all); remember, however that without the acquiescence of the PLO no *Pax Americana* in the Middle East is possible; and then sit and wait. Diplomacy is the subtlest martial art of all.

Assad reasoned in the way America must have wished. If he, the architect of peace in the Lebanon, could deliver the PLO, bound hand and foot, to the conference table, then who could refuse him the Golan Heights? Who could rival him for control in a West Bank which everyone knew had, one day in some form, to be returned to the Palestinians? And who would then have the most formidable voice in the Middle East? Not Sadat but Assad.

So Assad reasoned. So he invaded. And so he stayed his hand while the Right fought back and did his Black September for him in Tal Al Zataar. The atrocities committed in the final days before the fall of that refugee camp should make the name Tal Al Zataar resound through time like Belsen.

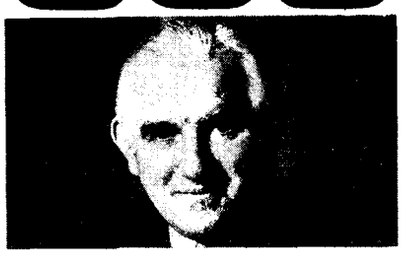
Six weeks afterwards the maniacs who had committed the crime proudly displayed before our cameras some of the still-unburied bodies of their victims, observing that since the female corpse before us was a Palestinian 'she smelt just as bad when she was alive'. And it could not have happened without the consent of Syria. The Palestinians, defiantly denying the truth, were finally routed.

The moment had arrived for the final Syrian advance on the last Palestinian strongholds. As the tanks rumbled towards them, the Palestinians prepared for the last battle, asserting to those who would still listen, that if their generation had failed, another would rise up in its place. The battle never came. Led by Saudi Arabia the rest of the Arab world, sensing that Syria had done what was needed to tame the PLO, pressed Assad to call off the war – discovering terms for a settlement which, aside from the emasculation of Arafat's men, could have been exacted months before. Syria, escaping the world's judgment, was to police the peace.

But is a lasting settlement in the Middle East really at hand? Even if Arafat is humbled or dismissed at the Syrian behest, even if the Geneva conference begins, it is hardly conceivable, that after 30 years without a state, the Palestinians will meekly accept the direction of their affairs on the West Bank by Syria or Jordan.

And if they reject that, then the *Pax Americana* will surely collapse. The Lebanese war, with its 60,000 dead, will have been waged in vain. And the world will not be permitted to forget that it is no more possible to impose a final solution on the Palestinians than it was on the Jews.

GUS THE GREAT UNIVERSAL STORES LIMITED



25th Consecutive Year of Profit Growth

Sir Isaac Wolfson, Bart., Chairman.

The following are extracts from the Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 1976.

Profit and Dividend

Group pre-tax profits increased to £98.3 million from £89 million in the previous year. Dividends have been increased to 26.63%, the maximum permissible, and are covered three times. Earnings per stock unit were 19.3p against 17.5p last year.

Trading Review

Trading during the year in the United Kingdom continued to be affected by escalating costs and a general lack of confidence. Satisfactory results were produced by the Mail Order catalogue division, the retail furnishing stores of Cavendish, Woodhouse, Times Furnishing and Astons, whose operation generates an element of profit deferred for the benefit of future years, the Burberry and Scotch House businesses in both retail and export, and our investment, property and financial enterprises.

Overseas, the economies of most of the nations where we operate were more buoyant than that of the U.K., especially so in Europe. As a consequence our overseas interests, which now earn about 19% of our profits, made a most effective contribution to the overall increase.

Prospects

The Group is in good shape. Our efficient management techniques and conservative accounting procedures have provided the strong financial foundation for the further advance in profitability we have made during the year. We have continued our development of modern techniques in merchandising and marketing, systems, financial control and cash flow.
Our sales and earnings for the first four months are ahead of those for the same period last year.

Comparative figures to 31st March	1972 £000s	1973 £000s	1974 £000s	1975 £000s	**1976 £000s**
Turnover	503,062	604,018	692,292	786,923	**910,397**
Group profit before taxation	60,680	77,708	83,019	89,043	**98,349**
Taxation	22,809	29,989	43,033	45,314	**50,060**
Cash flow	31,025	48,899	34,791	40,240	**42,919**
Net current assets	176,598	222,048	251,068	294,189	**333,622**
Ordinary Stockholders Funds	230,199	277,199	304,855	337,574	**379,476***

**Excluding surplus of approx. £75m on informal valuation of UK properties as at 31st March 1976 and provisions for deferred profit of £73m.*

GUS operates over 2,500 Mail Order, Retail and Industrial Establishments in the UK and Overseas.

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Profile: Richard Ingrams

The Private Man

His face would make a good adventure playground for young dermatologists – all those mountains and craters and tiny volcanos, some active, some dormant, some long extinct. But for the student of character, it poses an absorbing problem of interpretation – what *are* those expressions that disturb its uneven surface? Was that a smile? Was that interest, annoyance, worry, fear? The lines change, and the troubled eyes do not reveal their secret. It's like catching a badger in the headlights: before you can slow down, the animal has escaped into the undergrowth.

For a man whose business is exposure and ridicule, Richard Reid Ingrams has succeeded in maintaining a very private life. Even his close friends are rarely admitted to that intimacy which characterises a normal close friendship. His enemies too have only the vaguest notion of what sort of man it is they so much despise. And no doubt they would be surprised by the niceness, the moderateness, the apparent sanity of the fellow. His admirers too might be surprised by this eager critic's sensitivity to criticism of himself and his works. There are clues to be found in his background, but it would be presumptuous to treat them as anything better than clues.

He was born in 1937, the son of Leonard St. Clair Ingrams, of Cheyne Row. In the *Sunday Times* book on Philby, there is a photograph of the Anglo-German Fellowship, in which both his parents are portrayed. They were members of that class which feasted at the sign of the swastika, and listened with interest to the speeches of Ribbentrop, and acquired free tickets to the Olympic games. Leonard Ingrams was, in his son's words, a sort of free-lance banker, with business interests in Germany and around the Continent. He would arrive in Berlin piloting his own plane, and he must have cut quite a dash. Ursula von Krosigk, a cousin of Schwerin von Krosigk, the Foreign Minister in the Dönitz Government, was sufficiently in love with him to dare to fly with him from Berlin to Dresden – terrified throughout, but feeling that this was the done thing. Richard never really knew his father, who died in 1953.

At the outbreak of war, the Ingramses of the Anglo-German Fellowship were rarely considered to be a threat to national security. Instead, their intimate acquaintance with the Nazi *geist* was harnessed in the field of black propaganda. The child Richard was taken by his mother to Scotland, where he was brought up in the house of his grandmother, a cousin of Maurice Baring. Father and mother, the one Protestant, the other Catholic, had come to an arrangement whereby their sons' religious education would be apportioned equally. Richard drew the Protestant straw, and went to Shrewsbury where his grandfather had taught. He arrived there in 1950, and in the next year took the top scholarship. In the same exam, Christopher Booker came third and Paul Foot fifth.

Churchill's House was known for its raffish personalities, and 'Ditch' Ingrams, with his musical talent and good alto voice, and his skill in the debating society, was soon something of a figure. Usually around the top of the form, 'praeposter', editor of the school magazine, destined for conventional success. Of his brothers, one is now a director of Baring's in Riyadh, one became a headmaster of a prep school in Cumberland, and recently disappeared in the Andes, and the other, who married the Baroness Darcy de Knayth, was killed in a car crash. Richard failed to win a scholarship to Oxford, joined the Royal Army Service Corps, to his disappointment, and became seriously ill with pneumonia. His interview for Usbee (unit selection board) went something like this. 'You played soccer for your school?' 'No.' 'But Shrewsbury is a soccer school.' 'Yes.' 'You played cricket for your school?' 'No.' 'Well what *did* you play?' 'I played the cello.'

He had expected to become an officer, and it was unheard-of to fail Usbee. But Sergeant Ingrams of the Educational Corps soon found the company of NCOs more congenial and varied than that of the officers. After a quiet time in Korea, he arrived at University College, Oxford in no mood to return to his studies. He was tutored in Greats by the philosopher Strawson, but found that he could never understand more than three sentences of what Strawson said; he was too polite to say so, and Strawson was too lazy to repeat himself. He took to acting (he is by all accounts an excellent actor) and satire. In 1960, when Booker was discussing with Bruce Page the possibility of founding a satirical weekly, it was natural that Ingrams and William Rushton

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(who had both worked on the school magazine) would become involved.

Ingrams was working in an acting company called 'Tomorrow's Audience', which toured the schools of the home counties, presenting dramatic anthologies of the *Hollow Crown* variety; and it was not until the company folded that he began to work full-time for *Private Eye*. He was very much the junior partner to Rushton and Booker, living at home in Cheyne Row, and courting his childhood sweetheart Mary Morgan – a horsey girl who gave classy parties, inviting for instance Prince William of Gloucester. The magazine was reaching its early pinnacle of success when Booker and Rushton were co-opted into television by David Frost, and it is from this period that we may date Ingrams's ambition to run the show himself. When he told Booker, over a meal in Jimmy's Restaurant, that his great ambition was to have a paper of his own to edit, Booker did not realise which paper Ingrams had in mind.

The success of *That Was the Week* (Ingrams watched the first programme on the first night of his honeymoon) undoubtedly benefited the *Eye*, but it put a strain on relations in the office. Booker went off for two or three months' break in Scotland, intending always to return; but when he wrote that he was about to come back he received an extremely rude, short note from Ingrams and Rushton (it began: 'Dear Booker') telling him that his presence was no longer required. Now Ingrams had the opportunity to shape the paper he wanted. His hero was Claud Cockburn, whose broadsheet, *The Week*, had attacked precisely the political milieu to which Leonard Ingrams had belonged. Although it had always been intended that the *Eye* should contain scandal and gossip, it was Ingrams who shaped the paper as it now is. At first, the circulation dropped from 90,000 to 25,000 and the angry Booker tolled the knell for the satire age. Then came the construction of the permanent *Eye*, the arrival of Paul Foot, the return of Booker, and the hiring of the present team.

The Ingrams method relies absolutely on casual talent. People are not sought, they appear in the office and gradually integrate themselves into the fabric. None of the writing staff work full time. The comic bits are composed collectively (by Ingrams, Booker and Barry Fantoni). Any forceful member of the team will make his mark (as Foot did) or define the style of the paper (as Nigel Dempster does at the moment) or lower the tone (Fantoni). Ingrams presides – teetotal (he gave up drinking in 1967 after a promising career as a bibber) and irreproachably continent in every other way.

He lives in Aldworth, in Berkshire, in a natty conversion job of an old cottage, bought with Baring money from a family trust. A nice large T-shaped sitting room, grand piano, rather good pictures, pleasant litter of books, a lofty Catholic wife, not much left of the spirit of the sergeants' mess excepting that one of his children is christened Fred. He keeps the wicket in the local village team, plays the organ in Compton parish church, and has returned unobtrusively to the bosom of the Lord. His favourite authors include Chesterton and Belloc; his neighbours include the Osbert Lancasters, Marianne Faithful and Richard Boston. Very agreeable. One can only speculate as to whether, had Ingrams continued to live in London, and had he therefore been forced into contact with some of the *Eye*'s more aggrieved victims, he would have been able so successfully to separate the private and the public life. For it is, perhaps, essential that the editor of the *Eye* should meet his victims as rarely as possible.

Last summer, however, he began to appear at parties around town, and to the astonishment of the London scene seemed almost willing to make a few friends, or to test them out. In the *Eye*'s world view, the forces of good and evil are set in a Manichean conflict: you are either friend or foe. Like the Kalmucks of tradition, who defined good or beautiful as Kalmuckish, bad and ugly as non-Kalmuckish, the good people are those with an unqualified loyalty to the *Eye*, the bad are all the rest. Ingrams, who in the interests of lifting taboos has kept the anti-Semitic joke alive in print, seems now to see himself as a kind of Gentile Dreyfus. The persecutor in this case, of course, happens to be Jewish.

But whatever happens in the Goldsmith case, as it rolls on from action to action, appeal to appeal, as lawyers grow old and rich in its pursuit, as the Goldenballs Fund passes the £35,000 mark, it is still unlikely to divide the nation into Dreyfusard and anti-Dreyfusard. The merits of the *Eye* are not so absolute as to call for the supreme sacrifice. Ingrams can hardly expect to play both Mr Valiant-for-Truth and Mr Anything-for-a-Giggle. The victims of his paper have been many, and many of them have been very wicked men. And many of them have not been wicked at all, and are therefore exceedingly resentful at the hurt they have suffered.

He has chosen, then, a somewhat lonely furrow to plough, and he sometimes shows that he feels it. The bravado of his public statements – his remark that the worst thing about going to prison would be the constant visits from Lord Longford – is quite admirable. He must sometimes wonder, however, whether the path he has chosen was the only one, or whether the same ends might not have been more cleanly achieved. But it is most unusual for him to admit that he has been wrong, except in a wording devised by lawyers. For the most part he seems to consider himself, at very worst, the justified sinner.

Jeremy Bentham

Swearing in Court

'Oaths are but words, and words but wind.' Samuel Butler's sentiments, expressed three centuries ago in *Hudibras*, aptly describe the irrelevance of the modern courtroom oath. Oath-taking has a long history: the ancient practice of compurgation, whereby a number of people were called upon to testify, on pain of punishment for perjury, to their belief in the innocence of an accused, may be seen as the remote ancestor of trial by jury. Oaths are still administered in court as the essential prelude to giving evidence; but do they have more than a purely ritual function in a society characterised by widespread religious apathy, scepticism and downright disbelief?

The strictly religious connotations of the oath were mitigated by the Oaths Act, 1888, following Charles Bradlaugh's famous campaign to be allowed, as a self-avowed atheist, to affirm his loyalty to the Queen as a Member of Parliament; like an MP, a witness in court today may 'solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm', but he has to go through the rigmarole of satisfying a judge why he wants to affirm. The ritualised silliness of oath-taking was never made more transparent than in a recent case at Leeds Crown Court, when Mr Justice Forbes discharged a jury after ascertaining that a seven-year-old girl, who was a material witness, did not know what it was to promise to tell God the truth. More recently the Court of Appeal has sensibly doubted the value of the divine sanction.

The other side of the oath-taking coin is that those who lie, having sworn to tell the truth, are liable to prosecution for perjury. Yet few are prosecuted for this offence; lies are retailed in wholesale quantities by witnesses who can have little fear of retribution, divine or otherwise. Indeed, an accused person himself often, almost as a matter of routine, gives sworn evidence (unless he opts to give an unsworn statement from the dock) in support of his own plea of not guilty. And, as Sir Travers Humphreys once said: 'Juries . . . are not, I believe, unduly impressed by . . . [an accused person's evidence] given under the sanction of an oath . . . The modern practice has tended to encourage perjury, since the defendant is almost expected to deny his guilt and is probably aware that there is not the least possibility, even if his evidence is disbelieved, of his being prosecuted for perjury.' His lying might, of course, add months or years to his sentence – also not a very sensible judicial exercise.

Other jurisdictions are much more restrictive in defining the circumstances in which the oath can be administered. Professor Glanville Williams has remarked that 'in England the oath is treated with a levity that appears both remarkable and distasteful to the foreign observer.' Both *Justice* and the Criminal Law Revision Committee have recently called for replacement of the oath by a simple secular promise to tell the truth. The cause of justice is not advanced by an archaic oath-taking ritual which hardly anyone, whether or not they hold religious beliefs, takes seriously any more, and which some people may find downright offensive.

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C. H. Sharp*

Labour and Lorries

My favourite comment about my own written or spoken statements on transport problems is a simple and anonymous message which informed me that I was 'a pimp of the capitalist system'. Now, my political home, as it happens, is somewhere in the open country between Jenkins and Benn and nobody in Britain could be less anxious to see that famous store of tinned food being moved into Number 10. Nor have I ever sung the praises of capitalism. The cause of my critic's indignation was a statement of mine on television that road haulage would continue to carry most of the flow of goods traffic in this country for the rest of this century. Like many people, he apparently held the belief that road haulage is capitalist and bad while the railways are socialist and good.

Some more recent manifestations of this Labour preference for trains can be seen in reactions to the Transport Policy Discussion Document. This paper has been criticised, for example, in the Labour Party policy document 'Labour's Programme for Britain' and by the Parliamentary Labour Party's Transport Group. In both cases the main objection has been to the possibility that the scale of rail operations might be reduced. My own constituency Labour Party recently supported a resolution opposing any policy which 'commits the railways to a shrinking role' and urging the Government to ' . . . give the required financial support to save the massive cutback in the railway services and system and to promote an integrated nationalised and democratically controlled transport policy'.

These views need some explanation. Road and rail are, after all, merely alternative technologies for transporting goods and people. As far as I know, no one has suggested that the replacement of gas mantles by electric light bulbs was a defeat for liberal principles. Nor have I read of any political resolutions in favour of any particular process for manufacturing steel. What, then, are the reasons for this belief in the 'Leftness' of rail and the 'Rightness', and consequent wrongness, of road haulage?

The railways (apart from the 'Bluebell lines') are now publicly owned while most of road haulage is still in the hands of private enterprise. But the railways in Britain are essentially a product of 19th-century capitalism. Roads, on the other hand, have usually been provided by the state or by its local manifestations. Part of road haulage is under public control but there is no evidence that the lorries of the National Freight Corporation are regarded with any more left-wing favour than those of private enterprise undertakings. 'Labour's Programme for Britain 1976' expressed concern at the proposal of the NFC to transfer National Carriers and freightliner traffic from rail on to state-owned lorries. One of the most common arguments for nationalising road haulage is that this would enable a central transport authority to direct traffic to rail. If the whole of road haulage were renationalised tomorrow I do not believe that this would have much effect on the left-wing preference for rail. Although it is not an argument likely to appeal to people of the Left it might be the case that railways perform badly because they are nationalised. But privately owned rail systems have not been markedly successful in modern times and it is interesting to note that the NFC consistently makes a profit on its road services but loses money on its rail-based activities.

Maybe it is concern for rail workers which determines Labour attitudes to rail. Of course the welfare of rail employees is an important factor which must be considered in determining transport policy. But lorry drivers are also workers. There is nothing very socialist about transferring work from lorry drivers to train crew and the right of workers to preserve a particular technology is not part of even the most extreme left-wing political beliefs. Britain's economic problems might be even more formidable if a National Union of Horse Wagon Drivers had been able to ensure the artificial preservation of their industry.

A brief examination of the numbers of workers employed by the railways and road haulage is interesting. In June 1975 the total rail workforce, for both goods and passenger services, numbered 227,100. Road 'hire and reward' haulage alone employed 224,200 and road passenger services another 220,000 workers. But these figures exclude the large number of 'own account' drivers who are listed with the workers of the industry which employs them. Since there were 1,801,000 lorries and vans on the roads in 1974, it is apparent that the number of lorry drivers must greatly exceed the total of all railway employees. Even more interesting figures can be found in unemployment statistics. On 11 March 1976 there were 150 unemployed men who gave their occupations as being some form of rail worker and who could be assumed to be seeking work on the railways. But on the same date there were 54,561 lorry drivers who were out of work. It is very difficult to see how the interests of the workers of Britain would be served by adopting a policy which led to creating more jobs on the railways at the expense of fewer jobs on the roads.

If it is not transport workers, could it be the needs of transport users which make a transfer of traffic from road to rail an aim of socialism? Unless we believe that British industry is so incredibly inefficient that firms are using lorries when their own interests would be best served by sending goods by rail then I cannot imagine any good socialist reason for interfering with their choice of transport mode. Passenger traffic is outside the scope of this discussion but it is interesting to note that figures in the Transport Policy discussion document suggest that subsidising rail passenger travel from general taxation funds almost certainly involves transferring money from lower to higher income groups. This is clearly not one of the objectives of the Labour Party.

The main argument put forward by the PLP Transport Group for being more 'pro-rail' than the Transport Policy document is that the costing system is somehow unfair to rail and that road haulage enjoys a 'hidden' subsidy. Railway supporters have always been ready to point to some unfair disadvantages which explain the loss of rail traffic to the roads and to argue that this trend would be reversed if only the railways were given a fair deal. These supposed disabilities have included the need for rail to pay its own track costs; legal restrictions on rail charging policy; the prejudice of British industry in not being willing to give a fair trial to freightliner services; and the wickedness of road haulage in not paying for its social costs. It is difficult to avoid the impression that people, including the PLP Transport Group, believe in the 'unfairness' argument largely because they want to. However, the argument is important and requires examination.

Since rail receives large open subsidies from the Government and still loses money while road haulage undertakings pay tax to the Government and also (mostly) make a profit, it is apparent that the unfairness must be very serious if road is indeed carrying traffic which rail could transport more cheaply if it was allowed to compete on equal terms. The two possible ways in which road haulage might provide unfair competition for rail lie in not making full payment for the road track which is provided free by the Government, and in not paying for the social costs that are imposed on the community. The 'Track Cost' report of 1968 showed conclusively that even the heaviest lorries were paying more tax (in vehicle excise duty and fuel tax) than that part of the cost of building and maintaining the road system for which they could be held responsible. Since then, costs have increased and the Transport Policy document contains calculations suggesting that heavy lorries might be paying only 80 per cent of their 'track costs'. But subsequent increases in taxation and cuts in road expenditure make this figure very debatable. There is undoubtedly a case for redistributing the tax burden so that some lorries (i.e. 32-ton vehicles with four axles) pay a larger share and others (with their weight spread over more axles) pay less.

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This Jordan

☐ The *Jordan Times* again apologises to its readers and the parties concerned for the inadvertent mix-up in yesterday's paper by which the picture of the Ohio journalist caught in the lion's jaws sneaked into the space held for the picture of the breakfast meeting in Paris between French President Giscard d'Estaing and Iranian Premier Hoveida – *Jordan Times* (Patrick Cockburn)

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Economists have not, so far, been very successful in trying to measure social costs. Estimates of the money value to the community of having quieter lorries or motor cars producing less air pollution vary widely. There is a good theoretical case for charging lorries for the various forms of pollution which they produce, though in practice it is very difficult to devise an efficient tax which would lead to a fall in pollution levels.

Let us, though, for the moment accept the questionable assumption that some increase in goods vehicle taxation in order to cover full track and social costs would be justified. To make road/rail competition fair, it would clearly be necessary to ensure that the railways were also paying all their costs. This would mean removing all subsidies from rail freight (including the 'subsidy' which the Government pays when it makes good rail losses) and charging rail for its social costs (the two chief items would be noise and the 'severance' of urban communities by railway lines). If this was done, it is by no means certain that the competitive position of the railways would be improved. Even if rail charges did become relatively more favourable my own guess is that there would be very little reallocation of traffic. Rail cannot supply a through rail service to the vast majority of factories, warehouses and shops which have no direct rail connection. The quality of road/rail/road services is usually lower than that of all road (or all rail) transport and users would mostly be reluctant to switch to an inferior service.

But my main argument does not depend on the accuracy of my guess about the effects of ensuring absolute fairness in road/rail competition for freight traffic. If I am wrong, and if there is a significant volume of traffic now carried by road which could be transported more cheaply by rail (when all possible private and social costs are taken into consideration), then the transfer should be made. But the converse is also true. If the community is now paying more out in rail subsidies than the value of the benefits received then subsidies should be cut and the rail services reduced. It would be better to retire all rail employees on full salary for the rest of their lives than to preserve an inefficient transport system forever. Diesel locomotives running on steel rails are neither more nor less socialist than diesel lorries operating on roadways. There is no reason why the interests of rail workers should be considered of more importance than those of lorry drivers. The railways are not an end in themselves but simply represent one of the possible technical processes by which transport services can be provided. They should be judged by their performance, when allowance is made for both private and social costs, and by no other criterion. If, when all the sums are done, it is shown that lorries are the most suitable form of goods transport for our times, and that the freight-carrying role of rail should be very small indeed, then we should accept the facts. Whether we are Labour of the Left or Right, Thatcher or Heath Conservatives, Pardoe or Steel Liberals, or even of the party of Cyril Smith, has nothing to do with the case.

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Donald Gould

The End For Teaching Hospitals?

What! Close down St. Thomas's? What! Shut up Bart's? That does sound a bit like a proposal to raze the Tower of London in order to make way for a new marina, or to replace St Paul's Cathedral by a new office tower block designed to house the godless central computer of the National Westminster Bank. But the possibility has recently been noised abroad. The trouble is that the regional health authorities responsible for paying the bills which come heaving through their letter boxes every morning on account of the many costs involved in keeping London's great teaching hospitals going don't have sufficient money in the bank. So there is a crisis. And it is not just a temporary affair. It looks as if we can't afford so many costly centres of medical excellence in our capital city.

Does this matter? Bart's was founded (they say) in 1123, and the earliest origins of St Thomas's have been traced back until 1107. There is thus a running battle between these two great and ancient institutions concerning their birth dates. Both wish desperately to prove themselves the elder. As an old St Thomas's man myself, I tend to favour that foundation's claim to progenitorial primacy. But having worked at Bart's for two or three years, and having had a daughter trained there, I do find my loyalties divided slightly. I nurse a sentimental feeling toward both of those great and ancient institutions. I would hate to see either disappear. But how much would it really matter?

The threat to the London teaching hospitals has two roots. There is the overall lack of money for meeting the escalating costs of the National Health Service. When the whole thing started, over a quarter of a century ago, the architects of the NHS persuaded themselves that the provision of competent medical care to all, free of charge at the time of need, would so improve the health of the nation that before long demand would decrease, and the cost of health care would actually diminish. This idea proved to be a nonsense. The greater the provision the greater became the demand. Before the NHS was established people with failing kidneys simply died. And so did people with diseased heart valves. Now they needn't. Now somebody with non-working kidneys can be hooked up to a kidney machine and can be kept alive. Or they can have a kidney transplant. Now somebody with a malfunctioning heart valve can have the poor part replaced by a plastic substitute. So the cost of meeting the ideal that every citizen should be able to command the best medical care available, at the moment of need, has now become an economic impossibility.

The second reason why London's teaching hospitals are threatened arises from the inequality of the spread of money spent on health care. There's a big difference between regions. In the prosperous South East, more than £50 per person is spent on health services. Around Sheffield the spending amounts to about £30 per person. But it's not simply a matter of spreading inadequate resources more evenly around the country. The threat to some of the London hospitals is the painful and unpleasant beginning of a whole shift in emphasis and spending which just has to happen if the NHS is to survive.

Ever since the NHS began a grossly disproportionate share of the money available for health care has gone to the hospitals, and the proportion of the money absorbed by these expensive institutions has been rising over the years. And this has happened despite a growing awareness of the need for expansion of community services in preference to hospital based services. The hospitals took an estimated 56.6 per cent of the total in 1950. Now they swallow two-thirds of the cake.

But putting somebody into hospital is a horribly expensive way of treating an illness, and putting somebody into a London teaching hospital is the most expensive way of all. The average cost per patient treated in somewhere like Bart's or Thomas's is almost twice the national average, and the same is true for the average cost per patient week.

One way to meet the problem of escalating hospital costs is to make drastic cuts in the time patients spend lying in expensive beds. The need for this was stated over a year ago by Dr David Owen when he was Minister of State for Health. He envisaged, among other things, an end to the round-the-clock hospital service, which is not necessary except for the chronically ill who need constant nursing attention, and who simpy can't cope for themselves, and for the acutely ill who need skilled medical attention at all times. But a high proportion of patients in hospital at any one time are quite well enough to move around and attend to their own personal needs. They can go to the lavatory. They can give themselves a bath and a shave. They can feed themselves. They may be seen very briefly by a doctor once a day. Perhaps a lady in a nicely starched white coat comes along and takes a blood sample. Perhaps they are led by a probationary nurse down to the X-ray department (which is, of itself, a highly expensive way of getting anybody to an X-ray department). But, apart from the sheer convenience to the medical and nursing staff of having the patient actually there, on the spot, whenever his body might be needed for some item in the long, slow catalogue of events leading to diagnosis and treatment, there is often no other reason whatever for a patient being actually 'in hospital'.

They have learned this lesson in the US. There the costs of hospital care have been so high for so long that it is now commonplace to have motels scattered around great temples of healing, like the Mayo Clinic, or the children's hospital in Boston, where patients stay and live and eat at a tolerable price, and they go to the hospitals as outpatients.

So many of the British now in hospital as in-patients could receive equally excellent care as out-patients. Even a simple increase in efficiency could work miracles. In some areas, for example, mothers are admitted for only 24 hours for the delivery of babies. In other places the standard time of hospital stay is ten days. One or other pattern must be grossly wrong. But there is no hint, so far, that mothers and babies in the 24 hour zones do noticeably worse than their slouch-about opposites in more leisurely parts of the country.

David Owen was keen on the idea of having five-day hospitals which shut down at the weekend. And he had in mind day hospitals which treat patients during working hours and aren't hotels. There is certainly a need to use what money we can spare for health care in a manner which pays good dividends in terms of less suffering – less disease, indeed.

Our great teaching hospitals began as refuges for the sick and the destitute staffed by people of charity. They became centres of excellence for healing, and the headquarters of our best clinicians, and the places people were sent to when suffering from some of the nastier and more recalcitrant ailments of the flesh.

But all that now belongs to the past. The new medicine has to be concerned with the prevention, and not the cure, of disease. Our great London teaching hospitals (there are a dozen of them, and there are only 24 teaching hospitals in the entire kingdom) are now an expensive anachronism. It's a sad business. But there it is.

Roger Woddis

BR Job

'We have not put out an announcement because the rises are all of a small nature.' – A BR spokesman on buffet price-increases.

As we nosh on the restaurant train,
We gape at the bill
And go reeling back;
Rather than pay, the only way
Is to hurl ourselves on the track.

The rises are laughably small:
Tuppence on coffee –
You call that steep?
Why, at 15p it's almost free
And the four-bob bangers are cheap.

All the minimal prices they charge
Are discreetly raised
On the meals they serve.
You may explode on the iron road,
But you have to admire their nerve.

If the tariff should ever go down
(Not a hope in hell
But a man can dream),
You can bet BR, shy as they are,
Will emit a triumphant scream.

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London Diary

☐ Mrs Nesta Webster, thou shouldst be living at this hour. Lord Chalfont hath need of thee – or words to that effect. Mrs Webster was the greatest witch hunter of the century, discovering Freemasons behind the French and Asiatic savages behind the Russian revolution. She was particularly strong on the Bolshevik nationalisation of women, a topic I hope to see revived during the current Red scare. It is strange to me that prominent members of the Labour movement, some of long standing, lend countenance to this scare. I can understand 'infiltration' if applied to persons disqualified from being members of the Labour Party such as members of the Communist Party and those who run rebel candidates. Apart from these anyone can join the Labour party who accepts its constitution, including Clause IV. Marxists can be members of the party and many are. Indeed it is in my opinion impossible to be a socialist without accepting much, if not all, of Marx's analysis. Trotskyites can be members, though the word has now no precise meaning except as a term of abuse. The Labour Party is so tolerant that it includes even non-socialists to judge from the statements of those who, most perversely, call themselves social democrats. The allegation that the so-called Marxists in the Labour Party are the unwitting agents of Soviet communism is particularly silly. A most savage account of Soviet intervention in Hungary appeared recently in *Militant*, an organ run by Young Socialists. Who were taken in by Burgess, Maclean and Philby? Not rank-and-file members of the Labour Party, not the socialist Left of the time, but highly placed members of the Foreign Office responding to public-school loyalties, in fact precisely the people for whom Lord Chalfont and his like now speak. However, conciliatory as ever, I think we should change our name and call ourselves followers of Engels. He was an impeccable social democrat, convinced that socialism could be achieved in England through Parliament. He also happened to be a Marxist.

☐ Parliament is however an extraordinary institution, laboriously clinging to procedures that were perhaps once useful and are now merely cumbersome. Last week it interrupted its proceedings to have an end of the session. After that you might expect Members to go home for a few weeks or even months. Not at all. They turned up for a new session the next day with much time-consuming ritual. Why have sessions at all when they are merely a survival from the time when Members wanted to go fox-hunting in the autumn? Why should Bills die and be solemnly resurrected just because something called the session has come to an end? For that matter the whole procedure of passing Bills – reading them once, reading them again, reading them a third time with all the debating that this entails – is a rigmarole, particularly when it has to be repeated all over again in the House of Lords. There might be something to be said for it if the Bills came out wonderfully improved with all the contradictions detected. They do not. Time and again it appears that Parliament has got something wrong without noticing it. The French do much better. It is true that like us they foolishly have a second chamber. But unlike us they also have a Conseil d'Etat of legal experts who can point out the faults in a Bill and send it back to the chamber. As a result French legislation rarely achieves the opposite of what was intended. You may ask why our obsolete procedures survive. The answer can be found by paying a visit to the central lobby. There you will observe that Members of Parliament have a special walk which distinguishes them from the general public. They are the dutiful children of the Mother of Parliaments and treasure her every wrinkle.

☐ It has now become fashionable to seek parallels with our present troubles in the financial crisis of 1931. There is not much in it. Then, as now, Labour was in office and had no idea what to do. But then the Conservatives thought they had an answer; now they are as much at a loss as the Government. Then there really was a crisis or so men believed. Now it is all in the mind. Bankers may believe in it, ministers appear to believe in it. Ordinary people do not and never will until their lives are more seriously affected. They dislike the symptoms of trouble from unemployment to inflation. But they still have motor cars, in my opinion far too many of them. They still go on holiday to Majorca, an activity I do not envy. But events have not brought any sense of urgency. There is in fact more than a crisis. There is or may be an end of the world as we know it. Soon all the money in the world will be in the hands of four Arab oil-states. At that point money elsewhere will run out. Banks will close their doors. Financial institutions will be bankrupt. In such circumstances Coalition or any form of National government will be irrelevant. The Government will be as bankrupt as the rest of us. 1931 provides one consoling parallel. Then there was a solution, the abandonment of the gold standard, which no one wanted or thought of. It was applied by accident and it did the trick. Perhaps there is some such solution now, still ignored. But I doubt it.

☐ We have had many anniversaries this year – the American Declaration of Independence, the general strike, the Spanish civil war, Suez and the Hungarian rising. One centenary has been passed over. 1876 was the year of the Bulgarian Horrors and the indignation they provoked in England. All now forgotten. When I gave a lecture on the Horrors recently my audience thought I was referring to the members of the Bulgarian Politburo. Yet Sir Robert Ensor has described the affair as 'the most famous political campaign ever waged by a popular leader in the annals of English democracy'. The Bulgarian Horrors were small beer by 20th-century standards – only between twelve and twenty thousand Bulgarians were killed by the Turks and their auxiliaries. This only shows how civilised the 19th century was. In any case the movement was a great campaign and the most spontaneous outburst of righteous indignation ever known in England. It was supported by many bishops and by all the leading historians of the time, a curious abandonment of their usual reserve. Against this array intellectuals from Marx to Swinburne took the Turkish side. William Morris was an exception. When he became secretary of the Eastern Question Association, he discovered that 'only working men judge honestly and fearlessly in foreign affairs' and this turned him into a socialist. Nothing much came of the outcry. Maybe it stopped Disraeli from going to war on the side of Turkey. It did not rescue the Bulgarians. This was left to Russia. The task was left incomplete but I can think of no war other than that of Russia against Turkey in 1877 that was fought for purely altruistic motives.

☐ I have walked a good deal on Hampstead Heath recently whenever the weather has been fine. It provides consolation and perhaps a parable during our present discontents. During the summer the grass was burnt away and there were great patches of bare soil. We were told the Heath would never recover. Now the grass is already thicker and greener than before. I have never known the Heath so beautiful or, I am glad to say, so empty. Of course some losses cannot be replaced. All the great elms have been cut down. There is compensation even here. The views are more open and the prospects grander. We shall still be able to walk on Hampstead Heath with undiminished pleasure when the pound in our pocket (*vide* Sir Harold Wilson) is no more than a memory.

☐ Tom Driberg expressed a wish that his friends should have a farewell drink after the Memorial Requiem which is to take place at St Mary the Virgin, Bourne Street, SW1 at 12.15 pm on Tuesday 7 December. The requiem will be conducted by the Bishop of Stepney, the Right Reverend Trevor Huddleston. Tom was one of my oldest friends and I shall have a farewell drink next Tuesday.

A. J. P. Taylor

This England

Prizes: £1.50 book token for first entry, £1 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ The Sunday joint – already a luxury meal with best roasting beef at more than £1 a lb. – will soon be even more expensive according to Lady Harriman, a leading farmer and expert cook. As a housewife, Lady Harriman, widow of motor magnate Sir George Harriman, says she is appalled at the price of meat. 'As a housewife I know how beef prices have shot up. Three years ago I paid 17p a lb. for a forequarter to put in the freezer. Today I am paying 28p a lb. for the cheapest cut of beef for my great dane.' – *Daily Mail* (Dorothy Flavell)

☐ Mr Cotter told a tribunal hearing in October: 'We believe the law of Christ forbids working with unbelievers, which would include members of a union. I am not a militant or an agitator. I just want to serve my employers and Christ.' – *The Times* (Miriam Karlin)

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University Forum

Graham Paterson*

Vorster's Other Whites

One wintry afternoon my Cape Town landlady – a widow fast approaching her sixties – announced that she had been out and bought a gun. 'I'm reading a leaflet to learn how to use it,' she told me. Yet she lived far from the townships. Blacks rarely ventured into her prosperous white suburb – and housemaids were the only non-whites who worked there. But she felt threatened. 'It's not just the blacks nowadays,' she explained. 'There are just too many people who frighten me around here.'

She was referring to a forgotten class of South African – the poor whites. Ill-educated, often new to the cities, they are the Afrikaaners who fell – often by a hair's breadth – on the right side of the colour line. Barely literate, if they work it is only by virtue of the 'whites only' tag on their jobs. Violently temperamental and sentimental when drunk, their sons aim to join the railway police or remain in the forces, and their daughters – in a country where the race laws create an artificial demand – become part-time whores and 'hostesses'.

Each South African city has its crumbling poor-white ghetto. In Johannesburg it is the southern part of the city – closer to Soweto than the prosperous northern suburbs. The streets of ramshackle wooden bungalows are only one stage up from the better-off parts of the black township. Here live the failures in a system which was openly designed with them in mind. They have few excuses except their own personal inadequacy; yet they are bitter and blame others for their plight – whether the government for being soft on the blacks or the blacks for taking their rightful jobs.

Reporting on a succession of fires, stabbings and street brawls I met these people often and saw them at their worst. One mother-of-eight whom I spoke to, stood bewildered amidst the charred remains of her home. She had inadvertently set fire to it herself – yet she blamed her troubles on the influx of Portuguese immigrants who, she said as she swigged from a bottle, were taking all the houses and all the jobs.

Ironically these pitiful and inarticulate urban poor whites hold one of the keys to South Africa's future. At the bottom of the heap, they have only apartheid to divide them from the hated coloureds and blacks. They are determined not to lose their white privileges – or see them diluted – and their sense of racial loathing runs deeper than in any other part of South African society. They speak disparagingly of 'kaffirs' and swagger when blacks are near. Since they are backed by their conservative country cousins with almost tribal unity, Mr Vorster's nightmare is how to persuade them that change is inevitable. For any real change will take from them the advantages and self dignity of being white and plunge them from whatever jobs they precariously hang on to into continual unemployment.

A great number of them are almost permanently unemployed already, particularly the misfits and mentally or physically handicapped. In a country completely lacking social services and where most humanitarian instincts are employed bettering the truly oppressed they eke out a squalid existence on the fringes of what is the most prosperous white society on earth.

In Cape Town I visited a dilapidated boarding house near the city centre where a small fire had broken out – its inmates were white but their conditions were filthier and more depressing than many in Soweto. In a dark, stinking room I chatted to one man for several minutes before realising that he had no hands, each was clumsily amputated before the wrist and he gesticulated with the stumps. He lost them, he said, in an industrial accident and received a little compensation from his firm. With his family he had lived in this single room for 15 years – and, because of his hands, he never ventured out. 'At least,' he said resignedly at the end of his tale of misery, 'I'm not a kaffir.'

Next door lived a white prostitute, a frightened lady whose child had nearly suffocated in the blaze. Her English was poor but slowly and stiltedly she said: 'I know they're going to blame me for not being here – but I didn't leave him for long.' She held the baby and chillingly, in that land of legally enforced racial purity, the child's skin was dark.

At the best of times the colour line is hazily drawn and the poor whites come closest to it. Often, if skin colour was the only factor, it seems completely arbitrary how one family came to be designated white, another coloured. Stories circulate of whites with coloured cousins and despite all the barriers furtive sex between the races thrives.

This is precisely the cause of the poor whites' insecurity – they lack the sharp distinctions that education and expensive homes buy for the middle class. And despite being inarticulate and generally despised by the English speaking liberals they assert themselves where it counts – within the Nationalist Party.

The semi-racialist 'Van der Merwe' jokes told by the English speakers – which, along with Irish jokes, rely upon an assumption of racial stupidity for their punch lines – sum up their popular image. But for Mr Vorster, threatened constantly from the Right, the poor whites are highly significant within his party: his political base depends upon their allegiance. Before he can introduce the slightest reform he has to be sure of their support – which he wins with threats, exhortations and intensive propaganda campaigns within the Nationalist press. Because of their pressure upon him Mr Vorster can concede a great deal of window-dressing and practically nothing which impinges upon everyday life. So five-star hotel cocktail lounges are now multi-racial but the cheap bars where poor whites drink remain firmly segregated.

They regard any change with a well-founded suspicion and an awareness of their own interests which belies sneers of stupidity. They rightly suspect every concession to the other races as a threat to their own standing and chances. And they are aware that their jobs are often sinecures created by racial legislation. They do not need reminding that political change could overnight render superfluous white policemen who order black patrol-men which way to send the traffic or unskilled white overseers who 'supervise' skilled black workers. The poor whites owe what little they have to the Nationalist Government – and know it.

But their position within white society is uneasy and their poverty is an anomaly amidst the expensive cars, swimming pools and tennis courts of the middle class – material luxuries which the well-off wish to keep. To the rich, concessions towards limited black demands are a small price for keeping all that. The old bond among whites formed out of years of mutual self-interest is under strain and my landlady's new gun, her uneasiness and her fears are signs that even more hatred lies only half buried.

** Graham Paterson is in his third year reading P.P.E at Magdalen College, Oxford.*

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

In at the Shallow End

A crusty old bachelor such as myself, aged 66 and living in a Devon backwater, can hardly be expected to know anything of Life, or sex or where babies come from and so, before the sands run out and the grim reaper scythes me down, I'm considering boning up on these agitating subjects. Alarmed readers need not give a gasp and stop reading here. I'm as nervous as you are. We're in this together and we'll proceed carefully. Aware that matters such as this must be studied from both the practical and theoretical sides, I see myself in my mind's eye boldly applying to a 'computer-dating service' and, after answering a number of impertinent questions and enclosing a fiver, a sharp rat-tat-tat at my door at 4 p.m. brings my electronically-selected 'date'. A Miss E. Bagshaw, 48 if a day, in a Henry Heath hat and fawn tailor-made. Shod with stout brogues, she has the general appearance of a lady golfer of the 1930s about to take a swipe at the dog-leg hole at Sunningdale. Not exactly a *troublante* figure but one has to start somewhere, I suppose.

With my practical experiment all set up on the sofa and ready to go, I turn to the theoretical side, and here I have had a bit of luck. I recently had thrust into my hand the two-volumed paperback edition of John Atkins's invaluable *Sex in Literature*, published in hardback a few years ago and a mine of useful information at all times, the 'Literature' part of the title conferring a scholarly respectability on some of the rum goings-on within.

Anyhow, I've now read the book and there before me sits Miss Bagshaw. I see myself breaking the ice with an offer of tea, no wishy-washy Chinese kind but a strongish brew of the best Darjeeling (one spoonful for me, one for Miss Bagshaw, and one for the pot) and, as a subtle, tactful compliment to my fair visitor, sandwiches filled with Gentlemen's Relish. And now, after this treat, how to kick off? Perhaps I should make a strong beginning with the old Mau Mau courting custom of forming on the floor a circle of banana leaves, potatoes, sugar cane and molasses and request Miss Bagshaw to step into the middle of it and take all her clothes off. She should then squat down and eat some unusual parts of a dead ram which, though no doubt tasty and calorie-packed, would not be immediately obtainable, unless previously ordered, from our local butcher. Possibly this perfectly simple request is rather too elaborate for starters, and anyhow, bananas, either leaves or fruit, are perilous material, Malayan pygmies, who must have very vivid minds, apparently consider it indecent to eat a banana in public. And meanwhile I wonder what that 'E' stands for. Ethel? Edythe?

Any thought of getting amatory inspiration from modern Russian novels must be at once abandoned. The communists do not care for erotic themes or treatment because of their emphasis on the individual. Authors have to be wary of love's fulfilments. In the post-war best-seller, *Far From Moscow*, a sober couple called Mikhail and Tanya are in love and happily find themselves alone in the house of Tanya's parents, but Tanya spoils everything by suddenly developing nettle rash and Mikhail has to rub her legs with alcohol. I can hardly ask Miss Bagshaw whether she has nettle rash and then souse her legs with Smirnoff.

Remembering the old saying, 'When gentlefolk meet, compliments fly', I could fire off a few politenesses at Miss B and here one turns for assistance confidently to Syria and a wedding-feast panegyric from the flowery pen of Kasim al Chinn: 'Your neck is like the neck of a roe, your legs are marble pillars in the sacred house of the Omayads, your arms are peeled cucumbers' (well, that's what it says), 'your body is a mass of cotton-wool and your navel is so deep that it would hold an ounce of nutmeg butter.' Perhaps, when it comes to it, I'll reword those compliments a little, the combination of the words marble, cucumber, cotton-wool and nutmeg butter providing rather a baffling picture.

Sir R. F. Burton, playing with fire when translating interesting Arabian works, was really on to something helpful with the *Kama Sutra*'s section on kissing. Here's variety! Ordinary kisses come in six kinds, the straight, the limited, the oblique (screw the face round sideways and form the lower lip into an O), the exploratory, the revolving (seize your partner's head and chin and revolve them briskly), and then cupping, which if properly carried out should result in a loud whistling sound (hopeless to attempt it if either of you has a moustache). For advanced students there are the diverting (aimed at stopping a man dropping off to sleep), the worshipful (chastely planted on the draped bosom) and the signalling ('which shows desire when returning home late'). If a lady, while helping a gentleman out of his clothes, should choose to peck his big toe, this is called the demonstrative kiss. I'll say.

But good heavens, what is this? 6 p.m. and Miss Bagshaw is gathering up her 'things' and preparing to leave, with nothing achieved. Oh well, better luck next time, though actually I'm rather inclined to leave things there. But if you would care to have a go, Calder & Boyars sell the books at £2.95 each, and worth every new p.

Writings from Westminster

The Times Higher Education Supplement has asked spokesmen of the three major political parties for their views on the present and future development of higher education. The three M.P.s concerned are Mr. Gerry Fowler, Dr. Keith Hampson and Mr. Alan Beith.

In today's issue the former Minister of State responsible for higher education, Mr. Gerry Fowler, M.P., gives a Labour view of what is right and wrong with today's system.

Next week Dr. Keith Hampson, M.P., contributes a Tory view and on December 17 Mr. Alan Beith, M.P., and Liberal spokesman on education puts his party's case.

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Letters to the Editor

Standing Up for Sandelson

Sir, There are plenty of publications devoted to the trivialisation of important issues – the NEW STATESMAN does itself a disservice when it joins them. Patrick Wintour's piece on 'Stalking Sandelson' (NS 26 November), describing the moves at Hayes and Harlington to oust the sitting Labour MP, combined an absence of intelligible fact and comment with a plethora of irrelevant and class-conscious tittle-tattle. There are, in fact, two rational if diametrically opposed arguments which can be advanced on the question of candidate re-selection. Mr Wintour, ignoring these, chooses the road of unsubstantiated self-opinionation, and opts rather for the seedy world of Paul Slickey. Consider just a few examples of the Wintour style and approach:

(1) A local journalist . . . regarded Sandelson as privately 'scared as shit'.
(2) He [Sandelson] was a close friend of King Peter of Yugoslavia.
(3) . . . some of the local party cannot understand why Sandelson did not join the Liberals like his brother and father.
(4) In Eric Evans's opinion, he 'uses barrister's talk' . . .
(5) Educated at Westminster and Cambridge, nephew (sic) of millionaire Harold Lever, his brother Victor a stockbroker and his wife the daughter of a French industrial consultant . . .

Many democratic Labour supporters might look tolerantly on this heinous catalogue of alleged offences, particularly Sandelson's wish as a dedicated socialist to join the Labour Party at a very early age. Using 'barrister's talk' is, of course, serious but not entirely unforgiveable for a barrister and a member of the highest court in the UK. His educational background is clearly inexcusable – Labour members since the war have demonstrably preferred the Isis to the Cam, and Sandelson's heterodoxy on this score is sinister indeed. And then, a further serious accusation, Sandelson is a relation (a cousin, actually, not a nephew) of 'millionaire Harold Lever' a Labour cabinet minister who for some years has acted as adviser to Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan on a wide range of matters affecting the party and the Government! 'Brother Victor, a stockbroker' (i.e. me) happens to have written and spoken extensively for years on the need to reform the City, and our antiquated Company Law' and Sandelson has a father-in-law who is a long-retired octogenarian French industrial consultant (no mention incidentally of my brother's wife who is a full-time working schoolteacher in a comprehensive).

But the calendar of Sandelson's crimes is not yet exhausted. He apparently dined with the directors of Walls before their decision to close their Hayes factory causing 600 redundancies *'but did not get any advance warning'*. The Courtauld's Directors in recent times were even more taciturn – or many would say deceitful – in their *assurances to the Government* over Skelmersdale *et al*, involving infinitely greater lay-offs. Whose heads should roll for that? Are all MPs omniscient in their dealings with industrial boards or directors? This is pure *Alice in Wonderland* stuff.

Furthermore, 'Sandelson's credentials were not the best. He had tried and failed eight times to be elected.' This is really, on reflection, an extraordinary *non-sequitur*. An unusual degree of loyalty and dedication is observable in one who continues to fight for a party long, long after most people would have thrown in the sponge. The Labour Party in power has a surfeit of fair-weather friends (friends?) – it desperately needs candidates who will fight and fight again in hopeless Kentish agricultural constituencies, and the Chichesters of this world, in good times and in bad.

And so, finally, to the very heart of Mr Wintour's demonology. 'Comforted by the faith that the British people are innately conservative, his [Sandelson's] *idealism consists of a resistance to any measure that might smack of totalitarianism.*' (My italics). If that is a criticism, then let every democratic socialist everywhere treat it with the contempt which it deserves. For if the Labour Party accepts totalitarianism in any form, its socialism will be desecrated, and the sad despair of Solzhenitsyn will be the last helpless refuge of decent people. The Labour Party is the home of Aneurin Bevan, not Andy Bevan.

VICTOR SANDELSON

24 Abbotsbury Road
London W14

Mr Astor's Pilgrimage

Sir, Your correspondent, Alexander Cockburn (NS 26 November) hopes I will one day describe my visit to the Los Angeles 'lair' of Robert Anderson, the man who so unexpectedly rescued the *Observer* at the twelfth hour. May I do so in your columns? The lair is on the 51st floor of a downtown office block. I walked into the building to breakfast with Anderson but noticed no security guards, only a bored man behind a desk and two departing cleaners. The lift may have been monitored electronically: I recall a tapestry-carpet where you stepped out: it was of such striking colour and design that I found it hard to walk on. An elderly employee sat between the lift and Anderson's office (also filled with art) who operated a huge glass door electrically. This and Anderson's secretary, a reassuring lady named Miss Puckney, were the only security that he or his art collection appeared to have.

As to his arriving only by helicopter, while I was there he left by car with Joe Slater, head of the Aspen Institute, and travelled to the airport to talk Aspen business on the way, with no visible guard. (He must have slept or read his mail on the way back.) I understand Anderson travels everywhere with neither aide, guard nor secretary. He is said to be a chronic walker, both in cities and outside them. And he has a wife, seven children and friends who seem to have heard of the *Observer*. I think Mr Cockburn's informant must have confused Anderson with the late Paul Getty or even Howard Hughes. I found he was quite a different sort of animal.

DAVID ASTOR

The Observer
8 St Andrew's Hill, EC4

History and The Thunderer

Sir, May I request the courtesy of your columns to continue a discussion which has been taking place in both the NEW STATESMAN and *The Times*, but which *The Times* has now dropped as too embarrassing to its editorial policy?

The NEW STATESMAN has published a number of articles putting the case for import controls, including one by me (22 October). On 28 October *The Times* published a letter by me which stated that Britain's recovery in the 1930s had taken place under cover of Protection. I was advised in *The Times* (12 November) by that great modern historian, Mr Terence Higgins, Conservative front-bench spokesman on Trade, to learn the 'lessons of the 1930s' as his own (now Free Trade) party had evidently done. My letter to *The Times* in reply contained the following paragraphs:

> What are the 'lessons of the 1930s?' Following the Import Duties Act of 1932, a general tariff of 20 per cent *ad valorem* was imposed on all manufactures, with higher rates on steel and chemicals and selected luxury goods. Between 1932 and 1937, GDP at constant prices increased by 4.2 per cent a year. This may be compared to an annual growth rate of 0.9 per cent between 1900 and 1913, 2.3 per cent between 1921 and 1929, and 2.7 per cent between 1957 and 1969 – all comparatively free trade periods. Since 1970, when our remaining duties have been progressively whittled down, our growth rate has averaged 1 per cent a year. The higher growth rate of the 1930s cannot be ascribed to devaluation, since the competitive advantage we gained from leaving the gold standard in 1931 proved short-lived. It cannot be ascribed to rearmament, since a substantial rearmament programme did not get under way until 1938. Nor did it depend on the existence of Empire, as Mr Higgins suggests. Professor Drummond has shown that Britain lost rather than gained from the Ottawa Agreements of 1932.
> The recovery of the 1930s was based on the home market, stimulated by import substitution made possible by Protection. Next to Germany, Britain was the fastest growing country in the world – a dramatic, but all too brief, interlude in a hundred years of relative economic decline.

This letter was not published. I think the readers of the NEW STATESMAN may be interested in these facts to which the editor of *The Times* felt unable to give publicity.

ROBERT SKIDELSKY

18 Abinger Road
London W4

Taxing the Rich

Sir, I suspect that in your editorial last week 'Till the Pips Squeak?' my BBC comments about the Government dropping the wealth tax were used merely as a convenient peg upon which you embroidered your argument. Fair enough. But please don't assume that because I suggested that difficulties still exist, I am against taxing the rich more heavily than at present. I'm not. Indeed if the tax thresholds at the bottom are lifted (as indeed they must be), then the amount collected from the top must be increased. But how is it to be done? What kind of wealth tax do we want?

If we are not talking about piffling amounts equal to petty cash the tax must involve property as well as savings. That means self-assessment because not all private collections are known, properly valued and insured. Once the value is agreed the tax would have to be paid out of income or savings. And if the taxpayer had insufficient of either, his taxable possessions would have to be sold.

My point is, I want to get it right. It must look right and feel right – because once personal property is taxable the tax inspector must have the same rights as the Customs and Excise man. He must have the right to enter and challenge the existence of hidden property. So I hope the NS, like myself, wants to tread cautiously.

NORMAN ATKINSON

House of Commons

Sir, Much as I like the NEW STATESMAN I do wish that you would get references to financial matters right, because obvious errors throw doubt on the validity of the general argument. I am referring particularly to your leader 'Till the Pips Squeak?' where you say that investment in Government bonds enables holders to preserve the value of their money.

The current return on quoted Government bonds is in no case more than 16 per cent, which in gross terms approximates to the rate

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of inflation we are experiencing at present. It therefore follows that even a basic rate taxpayer cannot be keeping up with inflation, and at the top marginal rate on investment income of 98 per cent the constant reduction in the real wealth held in the form of government bonds is obviously very significant. In other words we already have a wealth tax in operation in this sphere by virtue of inflation.

B. HAGENBUCH

Serendip
123 Upper Chobham Road
Camberley

What Scotland Wants

Sir, There are more 'Ironies of Devolution' than I think Neal Ascherson had in mind when he wrote his piece last week. He thought 'a referendum on the Bill probably offering the independence option now seems likely'. I would think such an option is extremely unlikely ever to be offered to the people of Scotland by way of a referendum. This is because of this week's startling news about the results of the *Daily Record* referendum poll. A remarkable total of 45,475 responded to the poll. No less than 44 per cent opted for independence for Scotland.

I have always taken the view that the House of Commons would permit a referendum on self-determination for Scotland 'only when it is sure of two things – first that it knows the answer and second that it knows that it will like it', as I said in the House of Commons in 1969.

WINIFRED EWING

House of Commons

Sir, Neal Ascherson is mistaken. The Scottish National Party can't wait to get the Scottish Assembly established. Is not their parliamentary leader on record as saying that it will be a step on the road to independence?

No, sir. What terrifies the SNP is the thought of an election which simultaneously returns a majority of SNP MPs in Scotland and Mrs Thatcher to Downing Street. They will then be hoist with their own peculiar petard: whether to declare UDI in the face of an inevitable rejection of independence by the Tories, or to lose face and fade from the scene. May they soon be put in this position so that we can all get on with the job of making these islands a decent place for us all to live in.

ARCHIE BIRT

44 Mathie Crescent
Gourock

Fairness to Findhorn

Sir, It was perhaps natural of Gerda Cohen (NS 19 November), a master of the entertaining snap judgment on appearances, to dwell on Findhorn's nuttier aspects – the yellowing 40lb cabbages on sand publicity is now an embarrassment Findhorn has only itself to blame for – but it seems a pity that she has pre-empted a serious treatment in the NS of what is, for all its peculiarities, far and away the largest, most stable and happiest 'counter-culture' community yet established.

Findhorn has an uncanny resemblance to a polemical Utopia postulated in 1948 by the American behavioural psychologist B. F. Skinner in his book *Walden Two,* based on the premise that it is actually easier for people to dispense with selfishness than hold on to it. The warmth, the ease of communication, the honesty, the candour about its own human failings, the reliance on self-determination and the refusal to entertain judgments or dogmas (the community's only rule is against lawbreaking) have to be experienced to understand Findhorn's potential. One of Findhorn's lesser-known triumphs is to divest man-woman friendships of any sexual assumptions, so that deeply affectionate relationships can become universal without endangering sound sexual partnerships.

Skinner, through *Walden Two*'s chief protagonist, argued that change of this sort could never come about through politics – mere argument – but only by trial and proof in an experimental society. Findhorn is just such a society; and so far – albeit it works with idealistic middle-class people buoyed up by the funds and enthusiasm of a constant flow of guests – it works. It is too cynical yet to suggest it cannot be extended. Socialism is founded on universal love, but assumes the love before punching the buttons; Findhorn ensures the love, and the buttons punch themselves.

DAN WILSON

Ivanhoe
Hever
Edenbridge, Kent

The Restless Wave

Sir, As one whose father was a marine engineer with the White Star Line and the Cunard Line, I particularly enjoyed Arthur Marshall's piece, 'She's a Lady' (NS 26 November). But he is badly mistaken in accusing the *Carpathia* of 'static behaviour'. In justice to her crew it should be said that it was the *Carpathia* that rescued most – if not all – of the occupants of the *Titanic*'s lifeboats.

The ship that is said to have seen the rockets from the *Titanic* and done nothing to go to her aid was the *Californian,* though her master, a Captain Lord, who died fairly recently, always denied this, and the incident is still – and will always be – a subject of controversy.

E. C. HARRIS

8 Skintle Green
Colden Common, Winchester

Allais-Oop

Sir, John Sturrock takes me to task for presenting Alphonse Allais's humorous writings without enough editorial annotation and historical background material (NS 26 November). I think perhaps he is right. It was a deliberate, not a lazy decision, though. I suffered enough at Oxford from having French literature thrust at me almost hidden in critical wrappings to be determined that if I should ever come to present a writer, I would present him straight. I may have over-reacted. In my determination to see Allais simply as a humorous writer, I may also have been unfair when I say that Allais is a loner, and unappreciated in France. But when he lines up Allais in a tradition leading from Jarry to Queneau and Vian, he is citing three writers who, though I greatly admire them, were determinedly men of literature whereas Allais was determinedly a humorous journalist with no further pretensions: Could this possibly make his nearer an English than a French tradition?

As for his lack of appreciation in France; certainly there have been a clutch of paperbacks since the war (following 40 years of near-oblivion) and a splendid complete edition in hardback. But when I visited the publishers of the latter to sniff out any possible copyright problems a year or two back and asked in passing how the complete edition was selling, their expression and their answer were very melancholy.

MILES KINGTON

Punch
23-27 Tudor Street
London EC4

Long Established

Sir, How absurd that anybody could ever have seriously credited Martin Amis with the invention of the word 'ludic' (London Diary 26 November). Apart from the fact that, given the Latin, it almost invents itself, any student of child psychology will tell you that it has been used by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget to mean 'playful behaviour' (e.g. in *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood*) for decades.

By the way, did you know that the bumptious young literary whizz-kid Kevin Trend invented three exciting new words in his latest novel *Fornication Angels*? I believe the passage was: 'Ooo 'es got an absolutely *super ego* which just knocks me unconscious darling! Just dunno why 'e *'id* 'is light under a bushel for so long so to speak.'

JIM RUSSELL

31 Grange Road
Chester

Sir, Few would willingly become involved in a disagreement between the *OED* and Anthony Burgess about the origins of 'ludic' but it should be pointed out that the concept – if not the word itself – owes a great deal to the Dutch historian-philosopher Johan Huizinga, whose essay *Homo Ludens* antedates both the sources cited.

Still, Crucifer displayed a nicely developed ludic sense when he located the Baseball Hall of Fame in Manhattan. It is practically the sole claim to fame of Cooperstown, NY, a good 150 miles to the northwest. Even the Hall of Fame for Great Americans is – *sauve qui peut* – in the Bronx!

SUSAN H. LLEWELLYN

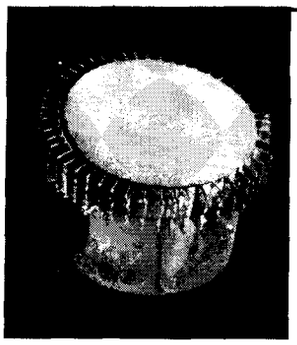
41 Terenure Road West
Dublin 6

Incognito

Sir, Jeremy Bentham (NS 26 November) almost brought the tears to my eyes with his moving description of Mrs Murray's 'ill-luck'. Poor woman! How was she to know that the man she brutally murdered was a policeman if the fellow hadn't the decency to wear his uniform when out shopping with his wife and children?

JOHN BOURNE

St John's College
Oxford



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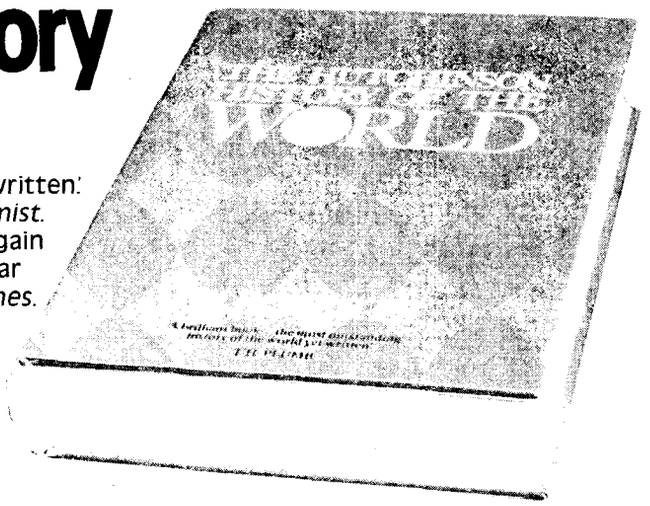

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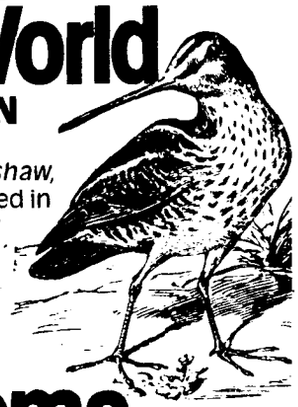

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CHRISTMAS BOOKS—2

John Jones

The Wheelwright's Son

Haydn: Chronicle and Works Vol. III 1791-1795 by H. C. ROBBINS LANDON *Thames & Hudson* £25.00

The reason middle-aged people tend to be bores about Haydn is our selfish yearning to tell our tale. When we were young the first 80 symphonies – yes, I meant 80 – were a closed book, with odd exceptions like *La Passione* (49) and *La Chasse* (73). Only the final C major and E flat sonatas were in the everyday piano repertoire, and a small handful of the trios – though here Cortot, Thibaud, Casals, so musical while so Schubertian, had done some recording, as had Horowitz in a big performance of the E flat. We used to hear *The Creation* and, more rarely, *The Seasons*, and more rarely still *The Seven Words* in one or other version; but the six late Masses were waiting for time to catch up with them, and the music of the operas lay buried together with their forgettable drama. In one area alone, luckily a vital one, it was possible to hold in the mind's ear a long life of primary creation, and that was in the eight volumes of 78s issued by the Haydn String Quartet Society – incomplete, but a fair selection.

To put it another way, the Haydn scene was an international scandal at the end of World War II. It was not just a musical scandal in the way I have indicated; it was a more narrowly musicological scandal too. The texts were in a mess. 'They have trombonised Mozart,' Berlioz once complained: 'they have copperbottomed him like a ship of the line.' A more serious and complicated charge lies against those who tinkered with Haydn's scoring in the early 19th century, who 'corrected' his harmony and even changed the very tunes. The means of restoration often lay at hand. And yet manifestly bad editions held their ground.

It was also a biographical scandal in that whole stretches of Haydn's life remained blank or at best thinly documented while the Esterhazy Archives were bursting with day-to-day information:

> Haydn and Haydn's works lay hid in night:
> God said, *Let Landon be!* and all was light

Not quite, any more than it was with Nature and Newton. In fact I think we are still waiting for some Tovey to arise and illuminate the vast phenomenon of Haydn, to give us a due sense of history and scale. This is not the place for close in-fighting. I will only indicate that some of my reservations are strictly musical. (Thus I believe Dr Robbins Landon exaggerates the public nature of the Salomon quartets and what he calls 'the "moral" domination' of the leader. He does not do justice to the royal even-handedness of Haydn's part-writing in that universe peopled by four friends, or to the size of many earlier quartets and the brilliance – and ferocious difficulty – of the first violin's role.) Other criticisms are stylistic. There are many fatuities like 'the ever-popular' Symphony X, and barbarisms like 'many such similar books'; and sometimes, for example when he calls the phrase 'an un-slow adagio' an apparent tautology, I think he means the opposite of what he says. But the world's debt to him and his colleagues of the Haydn Society is great. Not many of us, of course, are directly concerned with Haydn autographs, with reliable and less reliable copyists, with printed parts and scores deriving from good and less good manuscript copy, with shades and grades of falsification. The point is that these specialised interests are bound up with the enthusiasms of the rest of us who listen to and play the music.

This interrelation is most obvious with the gramophone. Recordings of all the symphonies and quartets have followed the publication or preparation of good texts. We also have the late Masses and oratories (except *The Seven Words* – perhaps the one surprising absentee). The piano sonatas and trios are well advanced, and a start has been made with the operas. Other factors have helped, like the old BBC Third Programme and the post-war proliferation of chamber orchestras and smaller ensembles from Leningrad to California. We take questions of authentic instrumentation and performance seriously nowadays, and there is the rare virtuoso, most notably Charles Rosen in his *Classical Style*, who can write as well as he plays.

Amidst this wealth, Dr Robbins Landon has launched his enterprise. Although first to appear, this expensive book is chronologically the third of five projected volumes; but when we try to do the inflation sum we can gain comfort from the fact that the present 640 pages of narrative and musical analysis are virtually self-sufficient. This is the story of Haydn in England.

He is 58. His clothes are old-fashioned, his body is a funny shape and his face is disfigured by smallpox scars and a nasal polyp. He is no Liszt. But the eye is brown and calm, it betokens stamina and application, it is a worker's eye.

> Joseph Haydn
> Never read Dryden
> Nor did John Dryden
> Ever hear Haydn.

Despite a certain hooliganism in coupling a universal genius with (so to speak) any old great writer, Auden's clerihew touches a point of identity in two journeyman natures. The wheelwright's son had further to go than the child of the vicarage, and in every sense he did go further, but they followed the same road of abundant, relaxed, many-sided professionalism.

Haydn came to England at the instigation of John Peter Salomon, the violinist and impresario. With commendable lack of chauvinism we islanders realised that we had nobody to compare him with except Handel; and 'the great Doctor Haydn' (D. Mus., Oxon.) and 'the mighty Saxon' were constantly rubbing shoulders in print and gossip. Haydn liked us too. He mixed with all sorts, including the King and Queen. The Queen said archly, 'I'll give you rooms in Windsor and then sometimes we'll make music tête à tête.' 'Oh! I'm not jealous of Haydn, he's a good honest German man,' the King chipped in – one German man about another. Earlier in their acquaintance George III remarked: 'Doctor Haydn, you have written a great deal'; and the reply from the heart of the overdriven *Musicus*, in his best English, was 'Yes Sire, a great deal more than is good.'

On the whole he preferred the society of 'my own class'. It isn't easy to be sure what he meant and how far he thought he had come in the world. Certainly the ferment of the English industrial revolution suited him. My mind jumps to one William Gardiner, a Leicester manufacturer and Haydn fan who, many years after the composer had left England and two volumes away in Dr Robbins Landon's narrative, sent him a present of six pairs of cotton stockings with various Haydn melodies woven into them.

In England he composed a lot, admired our women, admired and played our pianos, 'presided' at the keyboard over Salomon's big orchestra, stubbornly insisted on the *tempi* he wanted for his own works even against the taste of the leader of the band. He travelled, was fêted, observed English ways and indulged his *Guinness Book of Records* mentality by noting facts like the number of tons of coal burnt in London each year.

Here too the news reached him of Mozart's death. He was sent reeling. In his devout and worldly way he had not supposed that even God could think up such a punishment for mankind. His admiration for Mozart was the purest gold of selflessness, without taint of jealousy or apprehension, as he tried to impress on Englishmen his less flamboyant version of Turner statement about *his* contemporary: 'If Girtin had lived I should have starved.'

There is a grain of truth in this. *Figaro* reaches and holds countless thousands whom Haydn cannot touch at all, just as Beethoven's naked human will accosts multitudes for whom Haydn is just music. For Haydn is supremely a composer's composer: think, for example, of the new command of the

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resources of musical silence shown in the six quartets beginning with K.387 – a lesson well learnt, 'the fruit of long and laborious toil', writes Mozart in his letter of dedication to the master.

And Haydn is also a musican's musician in the widest and humblest sense. In the days before it was possible to switch on Dorati and his Hungarians, if we wanted to hear the stuff we had to play it ourselves. However horrible the result, however unmistakably amateur the sagging yet obstinate *mezzoforte* that issued from school libraries, parish halls, municipal institutes, it was Haydn. A travesty of Haydn, you may say. Well, so what? 'Is it better to paint or not to paint?' Vincent van Gogh's question surely meets the case of our musical daubing, and I'm not even sure that Haydn's ghost was blocking his ears in those days.

Valentine Cunningham

Documents in the Case

Victorian Panorama: Paintings of Victorian Life by CHRISTOPHER WOOD *Faber* £12.50

Ut pictura poesis. Philip Sidney thought so. So did Henry James:

> The analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see, complete. Their inspiration is the same, their process (allowing for the different quality of the vehicle), is the same, their success is the same. They may learn from each other, they may explain and sustain each other. Their cause is the same, and the honour of one is the honour of an other.

At no time has the fit between the two been so snug as in the 'modern life' paintings of Victorian England. Oh yes, it could be said of this genre, as Forster memorably said of the traditional novel, oh dear yes, the picture tells a story. And Christopher Wood's beautiful book provides the visual evidence, a treasure-house of illustrations – over 260 of them, including nine in colour – that nicely supplement, for instance, Peter Conrad's *The Victorian Treasure-House*: necessarily supplement such books, in fact, for this is the most complete visual record of its kind. Mr Wood's boast 'that this book includes all the best "modern-life" paintings produced in the Victorian period' isn't an idle one.

Mr Wood doesn't actually quote that passage from James's 'The Art of Fiction', but his commentary is nonetheless generally good on the literary connection. Or rather, his *commentaries* are: because there are two lots, one set attached to the illustrations as captions for the reader merely skimming through this *demi-tasse* of a coffee-table tome, the other for readers who want further advising on the topics into which the chapters and pictures are arranged (Money, Ruin, Home, Marriage, Sabbath, Fallen Woman, Railways, War, and so on: 'the themes outlined in these chapters embody all the preoccupations of the modern-life painter'). Irritatingly, a deal of duplication goes on between the two narratives. More irritatingly still, even the longer commentary is kept so summary that any claims to depth 'first book to study the paintings and their social and historical background in depth': blurb) are feeble ones. A few popular sources – prominent among them Flora Thompson's *Lark Rise to Candleford* – get done to death. And the offered generalisations are hardly gathered gold. 'The Victorians raised large families'; 'In the country conditions were usually better, although the standard of education might be equally patchy'; 'Medicine made enormous progress'; 'the Victorians clung to the vanishing ideals of country life'. Better simply to have settled for what is usually done very ably and revealingly – that is, illuminating particular paintings and bits of paintings with strictly and narrowly relevant background information.

'Some of the paintings may not be great art, but they are often good social history.' But in what sense? 'They are fascinating records of a period': yes; 'documents of how a society saw itself': yes, but that's not precisely the same thing as how society actually was. James again: 'as the picture is reality, so the novel is history'; but as the novel is a kind of split history, so the picture is not quite always reality. Pictures invited the picturesque, especially when the critics were listened to. Luke Fildes's ex-

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ceptionally graphic *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward* (he had worked on the *Graphic*, much admired for its radical truthfulness by the radical young van Gogh) was abused by the *Art Journal* for being a 'notable piece of realism': 'there is little in a theme of such grovelling misery to recommend it to a painter whose purpose is beauty.' *The Times* thought it mistaken of Fildes's *The Widower* to bring 'big, dirty boots, squalling and scrambling children, parental and sisterly love, into such contact'. 'Pictures are meant to adorn English living rooms': they mustn't bring a blush to walls young persons might glance at.

So the working poor become pretty or heroic or simply overwhelmed into generalised nonentity by the detailed Pre-Raphaelite affection lavished on every ruckle and stria of rock and furrow around them. Almost without fail – it becomes a test of the painters' infidelity to reality – the women are strikingly beautiful; whether they're sick, or recently widowed, or sweated toilers, ugliness and signs of wear and tear (a recognition even that there might be class differences in faces) are absent. Every poor man, apparently, had taken a professional artist's model to wife. In some cases had, no less, evidently made off with the artist's own wife and kiddies. Unprofessional models, let alone professional ones, came, of course, quite costly – Frith had to buy up all an orange-seller's stock to paint her – and they could be irksome: an old Jewish hawker kept trying to drive a bargain for Frith's suit all through their expensive sitting (ten bob for three hours, plus some jumble to be thrown in). Still, it's a flaunting denial of reality's harsher face that Effie should appear in the part of Millais's *The Music Mistress*, or that Mrs George William Joy should play the poor mother in her husband's *Bayswater Omnibus*.

The literariness of this plight is clear. It was not just that bits of literature – sheet music, texts, posters, epistles – are strewn flamboyantly about these paintings; that texts got written on to the very frames of Madox Brown's *Work* and Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience*, that paintings were done to illustrate texts from Hood and Tennyson, Ruskin and Dickens, that paintings like Hunt's needed commentaries from the likes of Ruskin before they could properly be read, and that painters provided pictorial puzzlers – for all the world like writers of whodunits. It was also that paintings had to succumb to the same demand for moral picturesqueness, happy endings and softened touches that dampened and distorted many a novel. In the re-done version of his Indian Mutiny painting, Paton has Highlanders instead of the sepoys of the first version, bursting in on a group of resigned females and children: his drama thus terminating, as a French critic complained, 'in the happy and paltry manner of a trashy three-volume novel'.

But, of course, as the trashiest three-decker might do, such distortions contribute mightily to building – as Christopher Wood rightly insists – an iconography of the age. Neurotically finicky in their detail, the paintings demonstrate the morality of the application to work that they celebrate. Even at play the punts-man in Gregory's *Boulter's*

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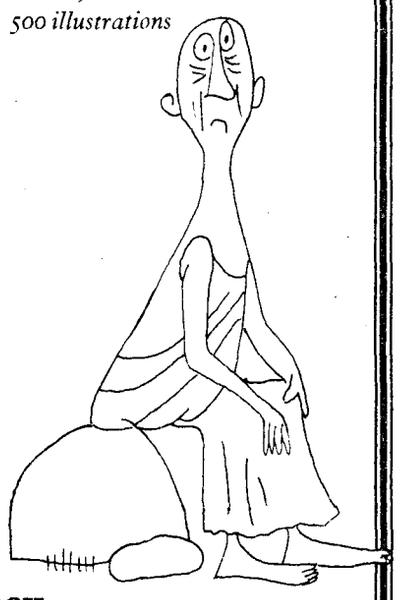

ANDRE DEUTSCH

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Lock – Sunday Afternoon is as energetically committed to his pole as are the almost Futuristically dynamic iron-workers to their sledge-hammers in William Bell Scott's *Iron and Coal*. Like many novelists, many painters amassed huge fortunes by their labours, and like the novelists they can't help celebrating mere numerosity, the accumulation of things and people. Theirs too is the art of great cities, of masses of people.

'Oh, mama' one of the queen's children is reported as saying of Frith's *Derby Day*, 'I never saw so many people together before.' A sheltered child! In the paintings the crowds are everywhere, thronging Holborn and the seaside esplanades: not spaced out as Brueghel's crowd-scenes but heaped overlapping upon each other, too many for any individual in *Derby Day* to be of particular interest, in an awesomely democratic art in which everyone has interest and nobody specially has value, in which, as Ruskin astutely put it, the picture has been superseded by the map.

Drawing rooms and salons are also thronged, as are the numerous proxy domestic interiors – domestic bridgeheads secured in the outside world – in railways carriages, omnibuses, theatre-boxes, on Ramsgate Sands. And the clutter of things the painter and novelist have been urged irresistibly to possess – they share their subjects' greed for massive acquisition – is, gratingly to us, satisfyingly to them, the index of a highly reassuring morality. No wonder it's the bric-à-brac that gives the game away, that betrays the *immoralists* in Hunt's *Awakening Conscience*, fallen, affrontingly, into the comforts of worldly goods that are by rights the due of the righteous. No wonder rambling so offends painters and novelists alike: 'People trying to get money without working for it,' as the shocked Frith expressed it before painting *The Salon d'Or, Homburg.*

The last rooms of Mr Wood's marvellous show are reserved for rather different, imperial themes. Here the heroising so ineptly pursued among the labouring classes comes compellingly into its own. And Elizabeth Thompson, Lady Butler's stunning – almost Russian – *Roll Call (Calling the Roll Call after an Engagement, Crimea)*, is as legitimately heroic as Tissot's marvellously airy, bright, Impressionistic renderings of high society are properly filled with lovely women. There was plenty of martial bravery and upper-class beauty about in Victorian times: it was the persistent granting of the toughly jutting chin to the out-of-work labourer and soft features to the overworked seamstress that was so dishonest.

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Paul Johnson

All-Rounder

Nicholas Bacon: The Making of a Tudor Statesman by ROBERT TITTLER *Cape* £6.95

This short but well-researched and judicious study of Francis Bacon's father is a useful addition to our knowledge of early Elizabethan England. Nicholas Bacon's political papers were consumed in the destruction of his Hertfordshire house, Gorhambury, and the gap they left can never now be filled. His life has thus attracted few students and no biographers. Yet it is amazing what a lot can be pieced together by digging in the surviving sources (many of them now in America), as Mr Tittler has done. Bacon's is a splendidly instructive case of how a clever, hard-working lawyer could make his way in Tudor England. His father was a Suffolk yeoman, a sheepfarmer and by no means a successful one: 'all he left was six silver spoons. But at least he saw to it that his sons got a decent education, and they all did well. Nicholas, the second, born in 1510, went to the Abbey school at Bury, and on to Corpus Christi, Cambridge (then Benet College), and Gray's Inn. As he became an 'ancient' of the Inn in the short space of four years, he must have been a fanatical worker, and it was the combination of brains and keenness which got him a footing in Cromwell's Court of Augmentations.

The court, set up to dispose of the Reformation loot, embodied not only the spirit of administrative reform engendered by Cromwell himself but the energetic traditions of his old master, Wolsey. It made the names of such brilliant civil servants as Rich, North, Sackville, the Southwells and Thomas Pope. It had a finger in every pie, all over the country, and it was an administrative machine and an exchequer, as well as a court of law. First as its dogsbody, then as its Solicitor, Bacon got a first-class training in government, before moving over to the equally ubiquitous Court of Wards and Liveries, as its Attorney. This gave him an insight into the politics and legal problems of the great families, and the law of inheritance. By the reign of Edward VI he was already one of the most respected and experienced government lawyers in London, had sat twice as an MP, and had built himself a substantial gentry house, Red-

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grave Hall, in his own county. He had also married twice: first to a Suffolk merchant's daughter, who died after giving him six children; then, immediately afterwards, to one of the amazing bluestocking daughters of the Essex landowner Sir Anthony Cooke, a step up both the intellectual and the social ladders. This made him William Cecil's brother-in-law, and brought him right into the heart of the Cambridge-Protestant government establishment.

Both Bacon and Cecil had to lie low, and play their cards very carefully indeed, under Queen Mary (Cooke actually fled abroad), but when Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558 they took over a large chunk of power. Cecil became Secretary of State, and gradually acquired an empire of jobs and perks. Bacon was made Lord Keeper and Leader of the House of Lords, positions he held until his death 20 years later. Elizabeth never gave him a peerage, nor accorded him the more honorific title of Lord Chancellor. In the winter of 1564-65 she even threw him out of the Council for a few months, as a result (Mr Tittler argues convincingly) of the intrigues of Leicester. But on the whole she valued him highly, especially as a parliamentary manager, and after his death often held him up as an example to his successors ('He was a wise one, let me tell you, my Lords!'). Bacon was a puritan but a *politique*, a moderate and a dove, who chose the motto *Mediocria firma*. The only time he quarrelled with his brother-in-law was over the latter's support for intervention in France. At home and abroad he was part of the solid ballast of the Elizabethan regime. Mr Tittler has no difficulty in showing that, whatever his personal views, he always came down heavily on the side of law, order, tradition, stability and the royal prerogative – as did his more famous son.

No Tudor statesman was effective for long unless he had a strong local base. Mr Tittler has an excellent chapter on Bacon's activities in East Anglia. He shows how he used his children to establish marriage links with a number of important gentry families, how he steadily amassed land in key areas, how he acquired Stewardships and Deputy Lord Lieutenancies, and how he used the growing influence thus assembled to determine the selection of knights of the two shires and a large number of burgesses. Bacon was throughout very active in ecclesiastical politics – he was, perhaps, the chief architect of the Elizabethan settlement in 1559 – both at a national and a local level. As Lord Keeper he presented more clergy to benefices, 1558-79, than any other patron, an average of 113 a year; and, in addition, he had his own personal group of advowsons in Norfolk and Suffolk. He was already a great power in the region of 1572, when the execution of the 4th Duke of Norfolk left an enormous hole in its political structure, which Bacon and his vast connection rapidly filled. So he was a central figure in the Puritanisation of East Anglia, a process which played perhaps a decisive part in the Civil War, and which was not reversed until the 1660s.

Bacon thus realised all his ambitions, in London and in Suffolk, though he did not justify his great intellectual promise. Except under Mary, when he was keeping his head

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down, he had little time for the poetry-writing and scholarly pursuits in which he delighted. His plans for a fifth Inn of Court, for the training of diplomats and statesmen, and the education schemes he drew up for the Court of Wards, adumbrate Francis's more ambitious 'new instauration' of learning; but they came to nothing. Bacon had no time. He never travelled abroad. Though he was MP for Westmorland and Dartmouth, there is no evidence he went to either, or ever crossed the Severn or the Trent; he may not even have gone as far as Norfolk, despite his manifold interests there. He was less travelled even than his mistress, who was essentially a home-counties queen. Perhaps this was because of his bulk ('his soul lodgeth well', Elizabeth joked). The truth is, he was too successful, too busy at Court and in court to become the fully-fledged Renaissance intellectual. His son, who was unsuccessful in politics and failed to amass a fortune, left a greater legacy of the mind. Oddly enough, they were alike in death, both succumbing to chills. As Francis relates, in the fierce winter of 1578-79, old Bacon liked to have

> his barber rubbing and combing his head. Because it was very hot, the window was opened to let in a fresh wind. The Lord Keeper fell asleep and awakened all distempered and in great sweat. Saith he to his barber, 'why did you let me sleep?' 'Why, my Lord,' saith he, 'I durst not wake your Lordship.' 'Why, then,' saith my Lord, 'You have killed me with kindness.' So [he] removed into his bed chamber and within a few days died.

Eric Korn

The Liddell Riddle

The Raven and the Writing Desk by FRANCIS HUXLEY *Thames & Hudson* £3.95

Some books stand superb and monolithic, as much in need of external props as Stonehenge, but like Stonehenge provoke in their admirers an irresistible need to carve initials on them; to prove perhaps, that the impact is not all one-sided, to dent that self-sufficiency. Jane Austen lovers show this besotted logorrhea; so, pre-eminently, do Dodgsonians (Carolingians?). But Alice lives in Wonderland, and curiosity is inimical to wonder. Weird and – from our condescending vantage point – pathetic Dodgson may be, but nothing about him is as interesting as what he wrote. Do we need to know what makes him tick? Butter may not hurt the works, but even the best sledge-hammer will. Alice may be an old bachelor's fantasy, but she's not an inflatable doll; you can't unscrew her either. Put her under a microscope at your peril; too bright a light will shrivel her. 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent'; Francis Huxley uses this almost as an epigraph, but it's also a charge of dynamite at the base of this monument of misapplied erudition.

Lewis Carroll has another malignant influence on commentators: the infection of his style which is (a) inimitable, (b) unsuitable for critical discourse:

> And if there is no raven involved, at least there is the Crow, for the White Queen immediately follows on by saying 'Humpty Dumpty saw it too', which seems to apply to this second riddle but refers back to the thunder, the storm, or what amounts to the same thing, a hippopotamus.
>
> Humpty Dumpty said he *would* come in, the White Queen continued – out of the cold, we must deduce, to show the effect of a corkscrew on those who are eggbound. We must now suspect that the lightning is not forked or sheet but spiral – that Alice indeed got her answer the wrong way round. Surely thunder is bolted as fast as a cork, and needs a corkscrew to make it pop.

Two hundred pages of this is a little like listening to a Freudian lecture on humour delivered in a variety of Goon voices, or being tickled under the arms with a raven's feather or the twisted tail of a mome rath.

The working assumption, which is valid and briefly fascinating, is not that Carroll deliberately left innumerable clues for the diligent researcher, but that there is an unintended 'subtext', an elaborate unconscious structure of thematic, genealogical, phonological and numerological correspondences. The free-wheeling mind runs down obsessional grooves to that foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

Why *is* a Raven like a writing-desk? It's the Hatter's riposte when Alice tells him not to make personal remarks, and *his* answer is 'I haven't the slightest idea'. Carroll is equally explicit, in the preface to the 1896 edition:

> I may as well put on record what seems to me a fairly appropriate answer, viz. 'because it can produce a few notes, though they are *very* flat; and it is never put with the wrong end in front!' This, however, is merely an afterthought: the Riddle, as originally invented, had no answer at all.

This is a tease; and it drives Huxley to ransack Carroll's and Dodgson's other writings – notably *The Hunting of the Snark*, *A New Theory of Parallels*, *Symbolic Logic*, and *The Dynamics of a Parti-cle*, to say nothing of Thomas Browne, Wittgenstein, the anatomy of a pig's genitalia, and the dreaded alchemical charlatan, Fulcanelli. All this to elucidate the rules of Nonsense which he defines, most attractively, as 'a logical game played with feeling by at least two people, in a spirit of self-contradiction, in such a way that one thing leads on to the other to the constant surprise and mutual enthusiasm of both parties'.

If Riemannian (cf. *Rhyme? And Reason?*) geometry includes Euclidean, then Nonsense logic may include the Aristotelian. That Carroll's Nonsense is not joyously anarchic, but systematically antinomian, is open to doubt; but it would take as much energy and ingenuity to find counter-

For children this Christmas – a *new Tolkien* – **The Father Christmas Letters** (£2.50) is the ideal Christmas gift with stories and colour illustrations by the author. This *'delightfully fresh and original'* book (TLS) is *'comic in a personal way'* (Sunday Times). Brian Patten and Mary Moore have co-operated on two books for children. **Emma's Doll** (£1.95) is a picture book for younger children, which has *'the authentic flavour of a child's dream'* (The Times) and **Mr Moon's Last Case** (£1.50), featured this week on 'Jackanory', is an *'enchanting story'* (The Times) *'stylishly told'* (The Observer) of *'two memorable characters'* (Sunday Telegraph). And Woodrow Wyatt has written his first children's book **The Exploits of Mr Saucy Squirrel** *'Children will adore Saucy'* (Sunday Mirror) and in the view of the Sunday Express the book (£2.95) *'will be great entertainment'*.

There is also a calendar of Tolkien illustrations for 1977. **The Lord of the Rings Calendar** has 12 colour illustrations, one for each month (£2.50 ex VAT).

Allen & Unwin's Children's Choice

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instances as Huxley has expended in accumulating his evidence, and by the laws of mirror-logic, all counter-instances can be reversed, like a left-hand foot squeezed into a right-hand shoe. Much (or indeed Muchness) can be made of Carroll's alliterative addiction, especially by the questionable application of Grimm's law to turn r's into l's, or, if you don't mind your p's and q's, into Elsie, L.C., or Alice. All those Bakers and Beavers and Boojums reproduce Carroll's stutter, the consequence, perhaps, of the enforced correction of his supposed left-handedness; mirrors do the same thing.

By such means Francis Huxley induces the laws of Nonsense, from rule one to rule 42, the oldest rule in the book; and 42 is a number that can be found with appalling frequency – give or take the odd digit – in Carroll's writing and his life. A most ingenious argument makes sense of Alice's multiplication table: 'four times five is 12, and four times six is 13 and four times seven is – oh dear! I shall never get to 20 at this rate!' – if 13 and 14 and so forth are not to the base ten, but on other scales, we have a series which approaches but never reaches 20. The argument is elaborate and, I think, involves a mathematical inconsistency: but it takes us to the heart of things: the whole apparatus is a magic potion – a theriac or treacle – to stop little girls growing bigger every day; as the mushroom, in carefully antagonistic doses, keeps Alice the same size for ever. For the pursuit of innocence must be a wild-goose chase; if you catch it the Snark becomes a Boojum and Carroll will vanish – he didn't go to Alice Liddell's wedding.

It entertains, certainly, but does it *help* to elucidate these dark equivalences, to find in the Riddle references to Ravenscar and Ravensworth, the North Riding (or writing), the Dee, the Esk, and the Ribble, a confluence of rivers which suggests the Joycean equation A. P. L(iddell) = A.L.P.? Or the anagrams? RAVEN and WRITING DESK yield GRANT KIND REVIEWS, a thought surely not consciously in the mind of Carroll, nor yet of Francis Huxley (HA! LYRIC SEX FUN).

Finally, we are left with countless solutions to the riddle, of which perhaps the least unsatisfactory is 'a raven is like a writing desk because it doesn't begin with the same letter'; but Huxley has ventured more: to unlock the dark chambers of Carroll/Dodgson's mind, and when he found the door was shut, he tried to turn the handle but –

Tony Godwin Memorial Award

Applications are invited for the 1977 Tony Godwin Memorial Award, which will enable the recipient to spend at least six weeks as the guest of a New York publishing house in early summer 1977. The Award will be given to someone whose work in publishing best reflects Tony Godwin's own enthusiasms. The judges are looking principally for editors under 35 who have not had wide experience in the United States, but they may also consider anyone older or in a different branch of publishing. Applications for the 1977 Award should be made in writing by 10 December 1976 to Christopher MacLehose, Chatto & Windus, 40-42 William IV Street, London, W.C.2.

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Robert Melville

Sugar and Spice

Lewis Carroll: An Illustrated Biography by DEREK HUDSON *Constable* £6.50

An illustrated second edition of Derek Hudson's Dodgson/Carroll biography has appeared, 22 years after the first edition, in time for the Christmas season. A few emendations have put the finishing touches to its factual reliability, and readers who approved of Mr Hudson's approach to the subject in the Fifties will be relieved to hear that it has not changed and will record with gratitude that he handles Dodgson's obsessive interest in little girls with rare delicacy. Many of the loving letters to them were destroyed before he became famous as Lewis Carroll, but Mr Hudson is able to quote from others which were previously suppressed. They were written it seems in a spirit of light-hearted fun, and if occasionally Mr Hudson perceives a hint of passion he passes it off with such phrases as 'it is just possible (though most unlikely) . . .'

The book should be a suitable gift for readers who are no longer children but continue to respond to the magic of the Alice books. As a present to teenagers, its desirability could be increased by pasting semi-transparent paper over the preface to the second edition. Mr Hudson has taken this opportunity of defending the incontestable fact that his text is utterly free from psychoanalytical interpretations, and he thankfully notes that Freudian theorising is now much less fashionable than when his book first appeared. (He was right all along!) Nevertheless, by way of having his cake and eating it, he describes (not *too* starkly of course) the kind of interpretation he has avoided. He tells us that 'as early as 1933' he had discovered its 'intriguing possibilities': he knew that falling down a well could be a symbol of coitus and that a little door with a curtain could be interpreted as 'a female child and her clothes'. He knows too that in 1935 Empson referred to Alice's pool of tears as a representation of the fluid in the membrane enclosing the foetus (and even to me, eager to believe it, it seemed a bit far-fetched). Mr Hudson claims that 'in plain fact' it alluded to a trip on the river with the Liddell girls on a wet day, which is an idea of his own and no more a 'plain fact' than the possibility that Dodgson knew about the amniotic fluid from a book on the physiology of woman found in his library.

In the introduction to the facsimile of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, Dodgson wrote under his pseudonym of

> the awe that fall on one in the presence of a spirit fresh from God's hands, on whom no shadow of sin and but the outermost fringe of the shadow of sorrow has yet fallen.

His own sense of awe was, however, reserved for fresh spirits which took the form of refined, middle-class little girls old enough to be good listeners and young enough not to blush when he kissed and hugged them. Apart from the ones he made friends with on train journeys and never saw again, he had over a hundred close, tense 'affairs' with little girls during his adult life. Some lasted longer than others, depending upon the girl's age when they met or when, as frequently happened, the mother intervened. There was of course much overlapping.

The dates covering his association with a girl named Agnes Hull are indicative of how inexorably such associations were ruled by biological time. She was already 11 when he met her on the beach at Eastbourne in 1877, so it could not be a long friendship, but it soon became an ardent one on his part and by 1879 he had plucked up courage to call her 'my darling'. In 1880 her Eastbourne summer ended earlier than usual and he wrote, 'Aggie darling, I'm quite too low spirited to write much. Why did you all go away so soon?' They must have been corresponding because in April of the following year he wrote:

> My Darling Aggie, Oh yes, I know quite well what you're saying. 'Why can't the man take a *hint*? He might have *seen* that the beginning of my last letter was meant to show that my affection was cooling down.' Why of course I saw it. But is that any reason why *mine* should cool down, to match?

In May he wrote again: 'I had better say at once, candidly, that I don't expect more than "My dear Mr Dodgson" and "yrs truly" in reply . . .' And he enclosed a savagely comic bill listing services rendered to him by a Miss Amelia Wiggins. Among the items are her pretence of being amused by one of his jokes, which cost him a workbox; for listening to a boring story with an air of interest her charge was a writing desk. Mr Hudson seems to think that the bill brought the friendship with Aggie to a merry close. To me it looks more like the desperately crude reaction of a rejected lover, filled with the bitter awareness that what his dear little friends felt for him was cupboard love.

The illustrations make a fascinating miscellany. They include specimens of Carroll's handwriting, his hesitant but lovely drawing of Alice 'growing and growing' and among many other visual documents, some of his own highly professional photographs, though not his fine group portrait of the three Liddell sisters, in which Alice is being consciously alluring. There is a big selection of the Tenniels and a number of good and bad attempts by various artists to create an alternative Alice. Rackham, Mervyn Peake, Ralph Steadman and Peter Blake achieve the nearly-but-not-quites; others come from *The Illustrators of Alice*, edited by Graham Ovenden, who includes two of his own pencil drawings: the one which

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depicts Alice turning her head to look back at the Mad Hatter and the March Hare 'half hoping that they would call after her' is very close to representing Dodgson's ideal little girl. But I have to admit that, possibly because he used the same model, she is interchangeable with some of his illustrations for *Lolita* (which have just been published by Academy Books). So I suppose it isn't surprising that it's not in Mr Hudson's biography.

Tom Baistow

Closing Time

Freedom Under Foot by NORA BELOFF
Temple Smith £4.00 and £1.95

Newspaper readers may be excused if they have forgotten the scarey stories and leading articles that Fleet Street editors ran for months, warning all good democrats that the freedom of the British press would be snuffed out by a journalistic closed shop if ever Michael Foot's trade union Bill were allowed to become law. After all, eight months is a long time in journalism – the Bill received the royal assent last March – and the press is demonstrably as free as ever it was to pour out its daily ration of trivia, perceptive features, sex, sport, gossip, household hints, crime, obits, parliamentary chit-chat, sensation and its right-wing view of society.

Which, one might think, rather tends to pull the *raison d'être* from under Nora Beloff's book; but, long an indefatigable searcher for Reds under the bed during her days as the *Observer*'s political correspondent, she sees Foot as a ruthless socialist who will stop at nothing to destroy capitalism and install the workers in the seats of power. Her book is not notable for its balance, and tells us more about the author than the villain of the piece. The needle entered Miss Beloff's soul when she got a vital point wrong in one of her articles about the Bill. Foot promptly slammed her in the House: 'Honourable Members may say that if Nora Beloff says it positively and with assurance one could be quite sure that the opposite is almost certain to be true.' Miss Beloff leaves no stone unthrown, no biographical detail unbared, to expose the hypocrite beneath the libertarian mask, making much of his curious friendship with Beaverbrook, which admittedly puzzles some of his best friends but seems hardly relevant to the closed shop issue.

Miss Beloff's trouble is that her obsession with the union menace blinds her to the wider context in which any serious debate about the freedom of the press must take place. At the risk of restating the obvious, one must point out that the real barrier to editorial freedom is the lunatic basis of newspaper economics, sedulously prompted by competitive private ownership, which inevitably concentrates control in ever fewer hands, narrowing the readers' choice with each merger or takeover. Nora Beloff

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This is the first reissue of Rackham's illustrated edition of *The Ring* which appeared in 1910 and 1911 in two volumes. They were an immediate success and have been sought after for many years by collectors, many of whom feel that these illustrations are the finest set Rackham produced in his long and fertile career.
£9.00 each

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brushes all this aside: '. . . the British press, by comparison with anything that appears in totalitarian countries, Left or Right, is varied, lively and free.' But the true comparison, for any democrat, must be with the press of the US and Western Europe. And in those leagues we don't shine.

To be fair, her detailed account of the long wrangle is commendably honest, but what emerges is less a study of Foot as Machiavelli than the exposure of the newspaper moguls as the Babes in Westminster Wood. Even Miss Beloff admits that it was unfortunate that the proprietors and their editors allowed themselves to be led into battle by Lord Goodman, whose disinterestedness was less than obvious in view of his double role as chairman of both the Newspaper Publishers' Association and the *Observer* Trust, and whose lack of political savvy was to leave him out on the end of a parliamentary limb.

No one can doubt the sincerity of Goodman's views, but his capacity for mistaking high-minded concepts for reality ran him into some chastening clinches, as when he told a group of Labour peers that all other freedom depends on the freedom of expression. Nonsense, Lord (Charlie) Pannell pointed out pertinently – the liberties of the trade unions owed nothing to the press and everything to the strength of their own right arm. No less maladroit was the editors' decision to engage Sir Trevor Lloyd Hughes, formerly Harold Wilson's press officer, as their campaign manager – at the proprietors' expense, of course. It seemingly never struck them that his long stint at No 10 made him the very last person to lobby Labour MPs against the Government. The collective ineptitude of such distinguished journalists as Harold Evans, David Astor, Alastair Hetherington and William Rees-Mogg must make the lay reader wonder how they ever succeed in bringing out a paper.

Their failure to define their objectives and do their homework was exemplified when they met Foot to put forward four proposals: exemption of editors from the closed shop; safeguards for senior executives; the right to publish non-NUJ material; and legal safeguards in the Bill. Perfectly reasonable points, but when Foot asked them what legal protection they wanted they didn't know. 'We had no idea . . .' says Astor, 'we'd never seriously discussed the matter.' This slap-happy approach reached a Marx Brothers level when Astor gave a dinner for Labour peers to drum up support for Hetherington's recommendation that statutory exemption should be given to any workers, including journalists, who could persuade a tribunal they had reasonable grounds for objecting to joining a union. Hetherington sat next to Lord Houghton: the boomerang outcome of their conversation was the Houghton amendments, rejecting statutory guarantees in favour of the voluntary charter which was prescribed in the Act and has still to be agreed.

Frank as she is about the editors' shortcomings, Miss Beloff is less than generous about the other side. She fails to point out that the outcry about NUJ 'censorship' was sparked off when underpaid provincial journalists blacked non-union copy to press their claim for a long-overdue rise – a purely industrial action with no political undertones. But the editors' widely publicised panic gave the young Trotskyites and bourgeois revolutionaries of the union their chance to seize power, however temporarily, and rule that editors must come under closed shop agreements. The fact that this brief putsch was overturned by a national ballot wins only the remark: '. . . after such a demonstration of volatility it became hard to argue that the NUJ was a body to which editorial freedom could safely be entrusted'.

On a scathing Foot speech about the autocratic way in which press lords hire and fire their editors Miss Beloff comments: 'What Foot did not seem to know was that the age of the great tycoons was over.' Last week her beloved *Observer* supplied its own wry footnote to that myopic view of the facts of life in Fleet Street: as her book came off the presses an American oil tycoon 'saved' the paper from falling into the hands of an Australian tycoon by taking it over himself.

A QUIET LIFE

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DUCKWORTH

Russell Davies

Underfelt

The Sea Around Me . . . The Hills Above by ROD MCKUEN *Elm Tree Books* £2.95
in the glassroom by ROGER MCGOUGH *Cape* 95p
Vanishing Trick by BRIAN PATTEN *Allen and Unwin* £1.25
The Goldfish Speaks From Beyond the Grave by JIM BURNS *The Salamander Imprint* £3.50 and £1.95

The current campaign to kill off poetry is being artfully led by a woman, Pam Ayres, the ex-RAF rustic with the crevasse-like dimples. I have no example of Ms Ayres's work to hand, but it's her manner of delivery that is important: a brilliant variation on the come-halfway-hither ogling routine with which a teenage daughter, exercising her first false eyelashes, might bemuse (and embarrass) her dad. This works so well that, for the time being, nobody reading verse aloud on telly or public platform can hope to be received with anything but polite disappointment by an audience trained on Ms Ayres's mannerisms: the 'oh' with which each of her works traditionally starts, as if something you'd said had just reminded her of the poem in question (very Bardic, this); her savagely dwelt-on double-meanings, featuring matchless eyelash-deployment; and in particular the reined-in giggle effect, which no one with a face less elaborately muscled than Ms Ayres's could possibly attempt. She is unique, thank the Lord, and the other performer-poets had better look to their plasti-laurelettes.

Deposed topper of the British charts (though worldwide he should worry) is Rod McKuen. His habit is simply to growl in a broken manner while fondling a vast and humanity-proving dog. His new book of poetisms appears to be number 13 – unlucky for all – and its publishers, plus the staff of Stanyan Records, Los Angeles, thank you 'for your interest in Rod McKuen'. They also invite you to 'take advantage of the Special Rod McKuen Record Offer listed on the detachable slip alongside', which leaves you a desperate choice: read the book, or have it croaked at you by Big McK. One factor to bear in mind is that there are 150 pages of book, though none of them is very densely carpeted with sense. What you get is more of an emo-

Tony Harrison

Heredity

'How you became a poet's a mystery.
Wherever did you get your talent from?'

I say, 'I had two uncles, Joe and Harry –
one was a stammerer, the other dumb.'

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tional underfelt:

> Lenny seized the winter
> between his friendly teeth
> and bit a chunk or two off
> just for me.
> I was left to wonder
> more than ten years later
> if I stopped to thank him
> for the use
> of his own heartbeat
> next to mine.

The central maunderings in this book, I take it, are about chaps. If they hadn't been, I don't see how McK could have got a printable quote out of Auden. 'Rod McKuen's poems,' wrote the withered fruit of genius, 'are letters to the world and I am happy that some of them have come to me and found me out.' *Some* of them, you note. These, anyway, are moonings about the sea and the abstract demands of love. Swells and absences. They are perfectly weightless. Two things can be said for the volume: (a) McK seems to be cheering up just a little ('There is a new ongoing miracle that has altered everything,' he writes in an Author's Note) and (b) there is nothing in the poems quite so concentratedly wet as its dedicatory epigraph: 'This book is for an unnamed ocean, that separates me from myself.' Rod McKuen thanks Rod McKuen for his interest in Rod McKuen.

That he would never peddle you such a sockful of water is one of the good things about Roger McGough. The other is that he's got a reasonably subversive sense of humour that is settling down to a useful career in children's entertainment, *in the glassroom*, which is got up to look no less serious than Cape's standard poetry issues, and so will helpfully introduce kids to the idea that poetry doesn't have to have drawings round it, is rather full of old jokes:

> There was a porter
> who had ideas
> high above his railway station

and its author has absolutely no idea how to put rhythm into doggerel. You have to supply your own, imagining a beat-group backing you in your head:

> I'm an ordinary feller 6 days of the week
> But Saturday turn into a football freak.

But something in McGough's traditional Liverpool surrealism might just start children off playing about with words. God knows, it is not beyond their capacity to emulate him.

Brian Patten's things are more dangerous. Caught at the wrong moment, between an overdose of Clearasil and a failed exam, a sensitive adolescent could find himself falling heart over hamstring for this soup-brained material, and it might take him a decade to wipe himself up. 'If you had to hazard a guess,' asks one of Patten's titles, 'who would you say your poetry was for?' The ghost of Patience Strong must have been cooing in the poet's ear as he replied:

> For people who have nowhere to go in the afternoons,
> for people who the evening banishes to small rooms,
> for good people, people huge as the world.

'Who the evening banishes', by the way, is ideologically correct, according to the invertedly patronising attitudes that pervade

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> You ask for a poem.
> I offer you a blade of grass.

don't have the energy for grammar. Nor will they acquire it from Patten.

In many ways the most engaging person in this little pile is Jim Burns, whose work is about as poetically resonant as *The Private Eye Book of Bores* (and remarkably similar in some passages); he writes, in fact, prose broken up, the way the Philistines are always saying modern poets do. Where Burns scores is in being so very deeply pissed off with himself. This takes the form of being very deeply pissed, in almost every poem. Burns obviously doesn't want to live in Preston, finds no stimulation for fantasy in wives, either his own or anyone else's, and probably really does get through 'nine pints of beer ploughing through the poetry reading', as it says in 'Problems of the Proletariat'. His tone of voice is very easy to connect with the myopic corduroyed personage glimpsed pushing an empty pint glass at you in the inside jacket-flap:

> Yes, it's me and I'm drunk again,
> staggering down the street from the station,
> past the Railway Mission (speaker this
> week, Mr Plumb), with its posters
> calling on people to sober up and repent.

It's not art, but it's honestly dreadful life. I feel sorrier for him than for any of the others, which is surely the point. He and Pam Ayres should get together.

Eric Sams

Take Me to Your Lieder

Schubert: A Biographical Study of his Songs by DIETRICH FISCHER-DIESKAU *Cassell* £5.95

The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder: The texts of over 750 songs in German chosen and introduced by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau with English translations by George Bird and Richard Stokes *Gollancz/Pan* £7.50

Not content with having three names to everyone else's two, and cutting two discs to everyone else's one, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau took to writing and anthologising. In translation his books stay the same, but their titles are revised and enlarged. In German he was just 'on the track of Schubert songs'; in English he's past them into biography. Even his modest selection of song-texts now has the accolade of being named after its own compiler.

He certainly stands high among those who have helped to put German song on the world map. Of course he is a Titan among singers, even an Atlas of the Lied. But the trouble with towering is that one inclines to talk down to one's audience. The Schubert book (mainly commentary on some 500 songs out of 610) declaims and intones too much for my liking. The reader is enjoined to refrain from condemning or disparaging the songs for this or that supposed failing. But the author, by special indulgence, freely disparages the poetry or the music, just for failing to appeal to him. An arguably better commentator (Capell) earns just two references, both slighting, for doing exactly the same. An arguably better Lied-interpreter (Schwarzkopf) achieves a bare listing of her name, among several second-raters. As the fruit of a lifetime's knowledge and experience, it all seems rather under-ripe as well as tart. Personal taste is presented as objective fact, as if an accomplished singer naturally had a definitive voice.

That assumption can be well-founded, for example in the comments on singers' ideas and techniques. But the rest is mostly just description of music, or a collection of previous musicology. The description is rarely relieved, in my view, by any real warmth or insight. Both style and content often suggest a book for the layman by a Lehmann ('*Halt* shows us that the youth has arrived at the mill. He asks the stream if all this has been planned!'). This impression is accentuated by an English translation which, so far from rendering unfamiliar songs more accessible, can actually make old friends difficult to recognise. In all five of the obviously dubious passages I checked, neither Schubert's music nor the original German had been properly construed.

But considered as a compilation of source material the book has value; the painstaking and effective collocation of relevant detail could be of some service to scholars. They had better buy the German edition, all the same, because this one tacitly omits many of the original features (e.g., all the 70 pictures of Schubert's poets). There never were any musical illustrations; it's not that kind of book.

Gollancz seem better advised in their production of a multi-purpose tool for the Lied-lover's basic kit, adaptable at need as a concert-goer's vade mecum, a record-collector's handbook, an extensive anthology or a historical source-book, whether for ready reference, discursive reading or serious study. It's a great pity that the format so often obscures the form, by breaking up the lines of German verse; and the many lacunae and errors, e.g., in the dating of songs, should certainly have been amended. But the song-translations show not only a reasonable competence but a sensitivity comparable to that of Professor Prawer in his *Penguin Book of Lieder*, and in more than twice as many texts. Even so, the material is still rather exiguous for the massive corpus of the Lied form; thus only about half Brahms is covered.

There has quite recently (1973) been a spirited and largely successful attempt to encompass the world of art-song by discussing and illustrating the art-song of the world, from Russia to America and from the middle ages to the present day. This is the long but remarkably searching look taken by Werner Oehlmann in his densely-packed Reclam pocket-book, the *Liedführer*.

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Let's hope that some enterprising publisher will commission a translation, even if only in the belief that it's a biography of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau.

Gillian Tindall

Love's Labours

Women of Iron and Velvet and the Books they Wrote in France by MARGARET CROSLAND *Constable* £4.95

Raymond Radiguet: A Biographical Study with Selections from his Work by MARGARET CROSLAND *Peter Owen* £4.95

Margaret Crosland dedicates her book about French women writers to 'my son Patrick, male chauvinist Francophobe'. I assume that by this she is expressing a conviction that someone close to her *must* come to share her own fascination with the world of French literature if only she presents it the right way. For she herself loves French writers – with discrimination and intelligence, certainly, but with a degree of enwrapped emotion which comes through all the more strongly for being never made quite explicit. Such a love is no disqualification for writing well about the chosen subject, but it has its dangers, and one of these is that the loving biographer tends to view his subject from too close and intimate a range: the detail is astutely perceived and within that myopic focus trenchant criticisms may be made, but one misses the wider view, the perspective gained by distance.

This failure to place in a general social or even literary context is particularly noticeable when the chosen subject is, after all, the literature of another country, another culture. Should not a book specifically about women writing in France make some overall assessment of the ways in which they reflect particular aspects of French society or thought processes (if they do), or alternatively of the way in which they transcend their nationality (if they do that)? What, in short, is special and identifiable about these women to warrant their inclusion in one book? *Why* iron and velvet? The quotation (from Françoise Giroud) needs substantiating.

Why, for example, has France thrown up Georges Sand, Colette, Simone de Beauvoir, Marguerite Duras, Violette le Duc and many others who have made a particular point and virtue of being 'outside bourgeois norms', whereas the English literary scene has been largely populated by women who have managed to write from within the framework of middle-class structures and have made a virtue of *that*? (George Eliot couldn't marry Lewes simply because Mrs Lewes was still alive – a far cry from the self-advertising bohemianism of the other George.) Could France ever have produced, say, a Mrs Gaskell, and if not why not? Why is the keynote of so much modern French writing, by men as well as women, alienation, while English writers, with the exception perhaps of Virginia Woolf, seem to draw their creative strength from an intimate involvement with the world around them? Why has lesbianism, real or cultivated, been such a constant leitmotif in French literary life but so unimportant in this country?

Margaret Crosland does not only fail to answer these questions, she fails to pose them. She discusses, for instance, the 'Paris-Lesbos' of the early years of this century in which the expatriate American Natalie Clifford Barney was the reigning queen, but, although there is a picture of Colette in her famous trousers on the jacket, there is no attempt to analyse what lesbian chic actually meant in French society. The only area in which she attempts a comparison is that of the differing types of publicity accorded to women in France and England, but as she does not relate her views on this to more general differences between the countries, her point is not a particularly coherent one.

This is all the more pity because Margaret Crosland does know a great deal about individual French women writers and assesses their works with discrimination. She has a nice line in thumbnail sketches – thus, of the late 19th-century Romanticist, Rachilde:

she saw that society was full of monsters,

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some of them only thinly disguised. She was also kind-hearted, hospitable and kept white mice; she looked after Verlaine when he was ill and made him drink chocolate.

And of Simone de Beauvoir, on whose books she is particularly good:

She has written too much but it is never dull and most of it is courageous . . . She seems to have little sense of humour but photographs show a well-balanced face and a gorgeous smile.

Such assessments may not be to everyone's taste, but they strike a useful balance between the crudeness of literary gossip and the po-faced conventions of Lit. Crit. Intellectual stringency is replaced by sympathy, in the French sense, by understanding and wide-ranging appreciation. At one point, when writing of Nathalie Sarraute's admittedly tough work, she remarks 'I feel as Raymond Radiguet felt 50 years ago . . . "Since 1789 they've been forcing me to think. It's given me a headache".' But she does not seem to suspect that Radiguet, precocious infant and arch-cerebralist, was being ironic.

Her short book on Radiguet himself, which appears this autumn from another publisher, containing selections from his work, is useful and convinces one that it was worth doing – if only just. Radiguet's genuine but indisputably minor talent becomes anaemic in translation, and Mrs Crosland seems to me a shade ingenuous about the nature of the post-1918 Parisian world in which Radiguet so briefly lived before succumbing to typhoid in 1923: surely the life he led would have killed him anyway as a writer even if death had not. But, there again, general enthusiasm and a desire to speak well of people in principle are good faults, and they are not ones greatly in evidence in the rarefied and clique-ridden literary atmosphere on the other side of the Channel. I think that on the whole the French are lucky to have Margaret Crosland loving them.

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Richard West

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The Daily Mirror Old Codgers Little Black Book Number Two *Mirror Group* 60p

In the years of mass unemployment between the wars there was a music hall song whose chorus ran:

If yer ain't got no work
Well yer can't get the sack,
That's an argument
That's sensible and sound.
So lay yer head upon yer pillow
And read yer *Daily Mirror*
And wait till the work comes round.

Today's 1.3 million unemployed can still find in the *Daily Mirror* the same old comforting mixture of sentiment, sex and public-bar wisdom.

The *Mirror* is none the worse for being a little predictable and old-fashioned. The old show-business saying, 'they liked it once, they'll love it twice', applies equally well to items about the Queen Mum, the puppy that drinks beer from a mug, or the girl tourist in Russia whose plunging neckline caused red faces in Red Square. Only in the *Mirror* could one read an article starting, 'If your budgie is going bald, perhaps it's because he's bored.' The leading articles tend to a bogus earthiness – Belt up Maggie! Come off it Jim! – but features such as the Keith Waterhouse column and Andy Capp strip cartoon speak for the common people of England as truthfully as *The Times* speaks for the ruling class.

Just as the best part of *The Times* is its letters column, so the *Daily Mirror* is famous for 'Live Letters', edited by the 'Old Codgers', with the assistance of 'our lad George' and 'our lass Lottie'. These last must in fact be a skilled team of researchers who can provide the answers to such diverse readers' questions as 'which English train service once offered a film show?', why marriages made in May are unlucky, and who was the lady during the last war who 'used to stand on the quayside at Durban, South Africa, singing patrotic songs such as *Land of Hope and Glory*?'

In book form, with the Live Letters not actually quoted in full, the Old Codgers tend to sound a bit like a mere encyclopedia of obscure or amusing information (e.g., the identity of the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo). The book is best when it reveals the personality of the people who write the letters. For example, the Old Codgers say they are regularly asked 'how can I measure my head to get my hat size?', and also how to prepare a pillow of hops as a cure for insomnia. (Surely drinking the beer would be more effective?) There was an ex-Royal Marine whose ship HMS *Glasgow* during the first world war had sunk the German cruiser *Dresden* from which a pig was rescued and christened Dennis. Could the Old Codgers discover what became of the creature? Yes: on arrival in England in 1915, Dennis was rechristened Tirpitz and auctioned three times on behalf of the Red Cross and the Agricultural Relief Fund of the Allies, realising a total of £1,785. Tirpitz died in 1919; his head was stuffed by a Piccadilly firm and now rests in the Imperial War Museum.

The Live Letters column is essential reading for students of English folk-lore and regional dialects. When Mrs Miriam Bell, of Upper Denby, Yorkshire, wrote in to say that 'snickersneeze' was originally used as a threat against naughty children, the 'Old Codgers' revealed that a 'Snicker-snee' was a large, pointed knife with a secondary meaning of cut-and-thrust from the Dutch 'Steken' and 'Snejen'. Scores of letters followed revealing such words as

Nannywaffing – womanising
Mammygag – derisive word for stew, porridge, mashed leeks etc.
Lallygag – day-dreamer
Airy jasie – shiftless
Span the whistle – strangle
Jansey – pullover
Gubbyhutch – untidily dressed person
Thraves – large number
In Dick Backey's Dike – behindhand
Mardy – spoilt by mother
'You have the fever of lurks' – you're idle
'You'll get there before bullsnoon' – that is, you're sure to be late
Stuchfow – a mixture of turnip and onion
Kiddle – balance on the back legs of a chair
Bomboffled – bewildered
Moppa – white of an egg

Peter Redgrove

A Roadside Feast

He slaps the hedgehog off the road
He chivvies it off with scraping prongs
He pins it alive on metal points
The blood catches the starlight
He says you must watch for fleas and not
touch the vermin
He prods it down in the bank of clay
He stirs it round until it is an earth ball
Taking a twig he scrapes it off
Into the heart of the fire where it glows
And sizzles like a speeding cannonball
A high-pitched cry of juice from a blowhole
With his trowel he dibbles it out on a stone
Taps it and cracks it, the clay shards-off
He pulls them with scalding fingers
A roasting smell pays attention, we
lean forward,
Like a six-inch pig the naked food
Glorious with grease. He waves us off
Bake your own hedge-pig, he says.
I pick up a shard, daggered with long pins.

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Mithering – trouble
Whoopshelaney – on the boil (of a kettle)
Gyvery – flashy, common

Sometimes the 'Live Letters' column flares into controversy, as it did when the 'Old Codgers' offered to settle a bet about the composer of *It's a long way to Tipperary*. This rekindled a feud that has been smouldering in the West Midlands for 60 years between the supporters of Jack Judge, an actor and fish shop manager, and Harry Williams, who lent him money and shared in the copyright of the song. In the course of the argument it was revealed that both *Tipperary* and *Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag* were written as waltzes and turned into marches only after the outbreak of the first world war.

The *Mirror* readers who write to Live Letters are by and large much nicer than those who write to the 'Public Opinion' column – or 'Viewpoint', as it was called when I edited it, some 15 years ago. The tone of these letters tends to be outraged, carping and mean: 'Doesn't the so-called Duke of Edinburgh realise that we're living in the so-called 20th century?', or 'Speaking as an ordinary human bean, I think that football hooligans are cruel bastards who ought to be branded on their foreheads', or:

> I have just spent the whole day watching so-called workmen repairing the road outside our house and at least one hour, 28 minutes of their time was spent drinking tea, smoking or chatting.

Only a few subjects, in those days, aroused much response from *Mirror* readers: the export of horses from Ireland to France for consumption as meat; a pop singer who dodged his national service; the fight between Scottish soldiers and West German civilians who had called them 'poison dwarfs' (the readers supported the Germans); immigration and violent punishment. Most readers opposed the *Mirror* arguments for the abolishment of capital punishment, and I remember one letter, written on notepaper embossed with a picture of bunnies sporting besides a thatched cottage, that came from a little girl who thought that murderers should be burned to death after first having been publicly 'flooged'. The letters on corporal punishment tended to be anonymous, typewritten and opening with the words 'When my 15½-year-old niece is naughty . . .'

The people who ran the *Daily Mirror*, most of them now in the House of Lords, were anxious that 'Viewpoint' should include letters on matters of current political interest, especially those in reply to the leading articles. Since there were few genuine letters on politics, I was obliged to invent them. Once when a Lord demanded a whole page of letters on Russian-American summit talks, I wrote the whole lot. Perhaps I should add that the *Mirror* did not know of such fabrications, which, I gather, are now banned by the National Union of Journalists.

The invention of letters was perilous even then. Sometimes one of the Lords would ask to see the original; six of my letters were quoted in this journal's 'This England' column, which rather annoyed the Lords; once I wrote a letter beginning 'Who are these pompous twerps with their initials on their number plates?' and the first edition

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had to be stopped when it was found that CHK 1 was parked downstairs – though I doubt if Cecil King would have objected. He is the only one to have stayed out of the Lords. The fabrication of letters, besides providing some harmless amusement, was also the only way of getting a snappy headline. The letter of which I have always felt most proud was written during a Vatican crisis in order to use the headline: 'Why can't we have a teenage Pope?'

Marina Warner

Wot Larks

Francis of Assisi: The Wandering Years by ANTHONY MOCKLER *Phaidon* £4.95

In 1219, when Francis of Assisi braved the Sultan of Egypt to prove the truth of Christianity by trial of ordeal, the infidels decided to test his virtue by another method. They sent a harlot to him. At her overtures, Francis replied, 'Come with me and I'll show you a beautiful bed.' Whereupon he stripped and laid himself down on the flames in the fireplace. 'Come quickly,' he said again, 'and enjoy this splendid, flowery and wonderful bed.'

Anthony Mockler chooses to believe this story, the only one approaching a miracle he tells in this highly readable, personal and freewheeling biography. He offers it for his readers' acceptance too because even if it is preposterous, and much too like legends of other saints' temptations, it catches the spirit of Francis, who, at the age of 40 had still not lost his early recklessness. He was always an inspired madcap, capable of condensing a complex situation into a single vivid and dramatic gesture. Francis felt God had called him to be 'a new kind of simpleton', but in fact he was an old kind, the kind with wit wise enough to play the fool.

His gift for the parable of gesture could be cautionary: he forbade all handling of money, and when he found that a friar had carefully stowed the alms of a well-wisher, he ordered him to pick up each coin in his mouth and carry it to the nearest dung-heap. He could be cheeky, as when, pleading with awesome Pope Innocent III for the approval of his fledgling band, he compared himself to a poor but beautiful damsel and the Supreme Pontiff to an enamoured king, from whose union a bevy of splendid and legitimate sons would be born. The Pope, it seemed, was tickled. He gave the order a verbal go-ahead.

But Francis's wit could also be savage, and one of the interesting facets of Mr Mockler's book is that his Francis stirs us to affection, wonder and even tears, although his biographer does not flinch before Francis's harder side. The famous scene at Assisi, when Francis publicly repudiated his rich father by standing before him stark naked in the public square, was not the last encounter between the merchant and his son. After Francis took to begging in the streets of his home town, his father, says the chronicler, 'was filled with sorrow, for he had loved him very dearly; he was both grieved and ashamed . . . and whenever they met he cursed Francis'. Francis, who never had any trouble finding obedient followers, set up an old man called Albert, and whenever he met his father afterwards, he would listen to his reproaches, then turn to Albert and ask him for the blessing his father withheld.

Mr Mockler argues that the central inspiration for Francis's enterprise was the idealism of chivalry, a romantic fascination with the Round Table. His brothers were less the '*joculatores Dei*' than the Knights of God. Although it is true, as is stressed in the title, that Francis set out crusading several times, and that finally, he joined the Fifth Crusade in Egypt, the Arthurian angle remains guesswork (as does the case for the Cathar sympathies of Francis's father). But Mr Mockler's grasp of the political and religious entanglements of the times, and Francis's movements within them, does a great deal towards rescuing him from the sentimental stereotype of the soft-headed saint who talked to birds. Appropriately enough, it was larks that Francis liked best of all. He could not abide ants, because they are so provident. He is surely the only man to win an establishment accolade – Francis was canonised in 1228, within two years of his death – who would have been on the side of the cricket.

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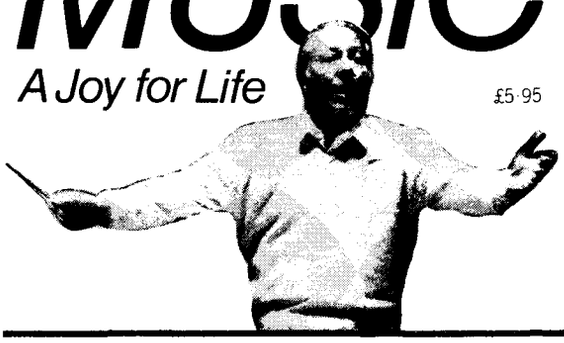

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Derek Mahon

Crash

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The Geek by CRAIG NOVA *Aidan Ellis* £3.50

'Entropy', that vogue word, is defined in my admittedly inferior dictionary as 'the tendency in natural processes for energy to be dissipated and become unavailable for use'. Qualify the tendency with 'terminal', that other vogue word, and there you have the recurrent theme of J. G. Ballard's remarkable fictions. He uses both words, in fact, and there you have the recurrent limitation of his thought; for, deft and ingenious as he undoubtedly is, we are always conscious of how up-to-the-minute his conceptions are, and therefore of how passé they will quite possibly seem when, like some lost future in his own mind, they fail to materialise, or materialise in a way quite unlike anything even he can imagine.

Ballard's method is that of H. G. Wells. He takes the known facts of contemporary history, the observable nature of the world, and makes logical deductions until he is in the realm of fantasy or, in Wellsian parlance, 'romance'. Personal character has

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little interest for him, and personal histories exist only in relation to an historical phase: 'Judith conceived so easily. The paradox was bitter, this vigorous and unquenched sexuality, this enormous feritility at full flood in an almost depopulated world.' There are nine stories in this collection. Some are *jeux d'esprit*, like 'The Greatest Television Show on Earth', in which the invention of 'time vision' has enabled the TV networks to cover, and even to improve upon, actual historical events. When they come to do 'The Flight of the Israelites', however, the camera crews, surprised by the force of the resurgent Red Sea, are lost in the swirling maelstrom and the world's screens go blank.

All of this is good fun, though not on the same level as the powerful novella, 'The Ultimate City', with which the collection opens. Here we have Ballard at his best – genuinely inventive, sharply observant and highly plausible. We are in the post-technological age. The cities lie deserted, 'like an abandoned dream waiting to be reoccupied'. The streets are lined with cars parked on flattened tyres; deer roam through lower Manhattan. Halloway, driven by curiosity, comes over in his glider from Garden City across the Sound, a place of greenhouses and windmills powered by solar energy, to investigate the metropolis abandoned in despair by his parents' generation. It is an Icarian flight. Intrigued by the possibilities, he reneges on the pastoral quietism of home to start a new, old-style colony in the city, and the history of urban man is briefly re-enacted, from the turning on of the lights to street muggings and terminal pollution. But what sticks in the mind is the description of Halloway's aerial ballet before the vast, reflecting windows of a silent office block, until 'colliding with his own image, he fell with the broken machine among the cars a hundred feet below'.

Craig Nova has been praised for his 'clean, pure, tight prose'; and indeed he can write very well when the mood takes him: 'The acoustics of the stairwell were faulty. An echo struck and lingered. Footfalls had the aspect of an object between two mirrors.'

An unusual writer certainly; and yet the story he tells is curiously thin. There is a Greek island, a hard-drinking American bum who antagonises the islanders, and a visiting American woman who takes him into her bed. A shadowy opium-smuggling racket is going on in the background; a donkey is stoned to death; we are never sure if the locals are going to kill the American or not. They don't, in fact. Instead, he winds up in a state of terminal entropy, having abandoned love and dignity to squat with a local idiot in the dust.

Among this week's contributors:

JOHN JONES is the author of *The Egotistical Sublime, On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy, John Keats's Dream of Truth* and a novel, *The Same God*.

Among ERIC SAMS's publications are *The Songs of Hugo Wolf* and *The Songs of Robert Schumann*.

PETER REDGROVE's poems, *From Every Chink of the Ark*, are due out next spring.

Piers Paul Read
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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Mervyn Jones

A Pinch of Snuff

The strangulation of Public Lending Right in the House of Commons was a pretty miserable event, the dishonours being divided between barbarian Tories and a Labour government which has never seemed to care very much. The bill – it was a Government bill, after all – may be reintroduced in the new session, though with every spare minute needed for devolution one can't feel confident of victory. But gnashing of teeth, however natural for disappointed authors, isn't the purpose of this article. It may be wise to spend a little time in considering whether we are really on the way to solving the essential problem, which is the impossibility, for nine professional authors out of ten, of making a decent living from writing books.

The flaw in any PLR scheme is that popular authors, writing books of which libraries buy several copies, will do best out of it, although these are just the authors who also have the best prospects of subsidiary rights and American publication. However much it was argued that there's always inequality in capitalist society (or in this mortal life, as you prefer) few people had a good conscience about this, and resentment was strong among young writers, as well as writers who felt themselves to be writing good books with an inevitably limited appeal. The gross sum to be put up by the Treasury and shared out wasn't likely to be enormous. There was talk of some ridiculous amount, like £400,000, being deducted for administration. The librarians having refused to do any of the work, the bill (despite pleas from the Writers' Guild) provided that foreign authors – mostly from countries where book sales are higher and taxation lower – would also benefit, on the grounds that it was too difficult to find out who was British and who wasn't. Meanwhile, thanks to budgetary cuts, libraries are buying fewer books and concentrating more than ever before on popular authors. If we do eventually get PLR, it may give an established author about enough money to pay for his holiday, and a struggling author about enough to celebrate the occasion. This is no way to solve the problem, though it may be an excellent way of helping the general public to imagine that it has been solved.

For writers – novelists, poets, biographers, in fact writers of all books that won't be used in education – the nub of the crisis is that hardback sales have sunk to practically zero. A sale of 2,000 is now considered rather good; this represents probably 1,200 bought by libraries, 600 exported (on which a lower royalty is paid) and 200 actually bought by our 55 million people. Buying new books is an eccentric and antiquated custom, like snuff-taking, and this kind of social change is seldom reversed. Paperback sales do reach reasonable figures, but the writer is getting about 7p a copy, so that he (read 'or she' throughout) will need to sell an awful lot of copies to bring in a viable income. Besides, most writers never get into paperback.

Hence, what matters to the writer is the size of his advance. Originally, the function of the advance was to tide him over until his royalties came in, since publishers pay very slowly – this, by the way, is getting worse, for some have taken to making up accounts only once instead of twice a year. But nowadays, with the diminution of sales and therefore of royalties, the advance may well be all that the writer will ever get. If he has any sense, he will reckon that he is selling his book for £500, or whatever, just as he sells a short story or an article for £50, or whatever. Publishers know that their advances are inadequate. But publishers are in business, and the advance must tally with their estimate of sales. Big advances are paid only to the few writers who are sure to get big sales, and who mostly don't care about the advance because they're living on the big sales of the last book.

This situation is unhealthy for two reasons. Unable to live by writing books, writers do other work and the books are the product of their spare time. Good books certainly have been the fruit of spare-time writing, but in general distraction is the enemy of craftsmanship; and in equity there's no reason why someone who chooses literature as a profession shouldn't be able to give normal working hours to his work and enjoy his leisure like other people. I doubt if anyone would employ an accountant who did the accounting in the kitchen after the family went to bed, having devoted the day to writing.

The other point particularly concerns novelists – and the novel is still our dominant literary form. Subsidiary rights – meaning the adaptation of the novel to film, TV or radio – may well be the only source of profit, instead of being the possible icing on the cake as in the old days. Publishers are impelled to select for acceptance novels which can be adapted, and writers to write with an eye to winning that jackpot. But this isn't the way to get good novels.

The only remedy is that advances should be bigger – much bigger. A fair rule would be to regard a book as a year's work (it often is, and in any case few publishers will put out more than one book a year by the same writer); and the advance should therefore provide a viable year's income. Advances of this order can be feasible only if the publisher has a fund of money additional to his commercial profits. I am making, in fact, a case for state subsidies to publishing houses. There is also a case for new publishing houses as public enterprises; and that case should be urged by socialists, always on the condition that diversity is maintained since the last thing we want is anything like a National Books Board.

To my mind, there are several good arguments for a subsidy scheme. It would be honest, reflecting the reality that the advance is what matters. It would enable the publisher to disregard the prospects of sales and adaptations, at least so far as the advance is concerned. It couldn't, even with all we know about the ingenuities of bureaucracy, cost much to administer. It could be made to serve the additional purpose of stabilising book prices. Since all writers would benefit, it would be an alternative to the system of awards from the public purse to individual writers, which almost inevitably leads to charges of intrigue and favouritism.

But it could be used flexibly, for nothing would compel a publisher to give the same advance to every writer. A, the author of a biography which has demanded five years of research, would get a large advance; B, a writer who has the lucky ability to complete a novel in three months and do other work for the rest of the year, would get a smaller one. (PLR, of course, cannot discriminate between them.) The distribution of the subsidies could also be flexible. Publishers who choose to produce only commercially profitable books would get little or nothing from the state.

It will be said, I'm sure (very likely by publishers, less probably by writers) that the idea carries a danger of dictation by authority, of state control of literature. The obvious, and I think cogent, retort is that we suffer now from the dictation of commerce. But the danger becomes real only if we assume a loss of freedom in every sphere. After all, the Film Finance Corporation has been with us for a generation; and we have had subsidised theatres for almost as long, with the subsidies gradually increasing until all our best theatres now depend on them. In neither sphere have we in fact seen the use of subsidy as censorship.

Indeed, the trouble has been that the subsidies aren't big enough to enable managements to disregard commercial considerations. There seems no reason to expect a publishing house to bend the knee more readily than the Royal Court Theatre. In any case, the publishers who are anxious on this score could reject the subsidies, and writers who are so inclined could give their books to those publishers.

One final consideration. Writers, alas, are a weak lobby. The long struggle to get PLR on the statute book, and the inadequate amount of money that would have supported it even if it had become law, show that plainly enough. Enterprises – publishers, theatres, and the rest – are a somewhat stronger lobby; the total of state subsidy through the Arts Council has risen over the last dozen years well beyond expectations. We are in for tough times. To keep literature alive, we shall need all the leverage that we can muster.

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Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Howl

King Lear *Stratford*
While Rome Burns *Marlowe, Canterbury*
The Real Inspector Hound and **If You'll Be Glad I'll Be Frank** *Young Vic*
La Dispute *Lyttleton*

I confess I wondered whether Donald Sinden, with his plum-wine voice, bug-eyed dignity and celebrated knack for making the solemn ridiculous, could possibly play Lear; and my doubts seemed confirmed at his very first entrance. A titter rippled through the theatre as he half-pranced, half-tottered on stage in Ruritanian epaulettes, his knees thrust slightly forward to give the impression of a caparisoned, somewhat gouty circus horse. But we needn't have worried, because the feisty hauteur of his opening scenes is soon replaced by something more potent. There is fresh, first-hand horror in his 'Let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven', and a good deal of the same commodity elsewhere. His Lear is an old, undisciplined child, consumed by dreads, desires, rages and affections, surprising in their unreconstructed intensity. It's natural to him to grab and hug Regan after he's stormed away from schloss Goneril, natural he should publicly break his promise not to weep when she too has rejected him, and natural he should drop to the ground and cradle the blind Gloucester when the two dodderers blunder into each other at Dover. But what makes this a developing performance, rather than a set of bellows, groans and fulsome fondlings, is that the emotions are gradually drained of their egoism: Sinden chronicles the process by which suffering turns self-pity and self-love into outward versions of themselves.

In practice this means that Lear learns to identify with the poor and downtrodden, classes never far from the drab, pock-marked, 19th-century face of this production. Indeed, the three-man directorate of Trevor Nunn, John Barton and Barry Kyle might be one of those philanthropic committees the Victorians were so fond of forming. They do all they can to bring period penury to our attention, gratuitously introducing a troupe of vagrants to trot round the stage between scenes, and transforming Michael Williams's Fool into a bald scrofulous relic, a seedily eccentric song-and-dance man who might have stumbled out of *Bleak House*. It's a little strange that Lear has to raid the gutters of Dickens and Mayhew for his courtly amusements, and slightly surprising he should keep calling the tattered ancient 'boy'; but at least it helps directors determined to stress that *Lear* is a social as well as an elemental play. So it may be, too. But I must admit that the Sally-army squalor did less to convince me of this than did Sinden in his madness, all baffled outrage as he pitched into greedy justices, lecherous beadles, and the robes and gowns that hide the vices poverty makes plain.

Barbara Leigh-Hunt's Goneril at first reminded me of another of Lear's pet hates. She's the nice-mannered, long-suffering housewife, 'yond simpering dame whose face between her forks presages snow'. But she hardens into something scarcely less stony than Judi Dench's Regan, who has begun, rather similarly, as a stuttering girl, irritating her father by her awkwardness. I didn't see why this concrete princess should scamper in horror from her husband's wounds when, a moment before, she's presided over her host's eye-scrape like an ultra-competent ward sister; but it's a nice performance, matched in thoughfulness by Tony Church's bookish Gloucester and Robin Ellis's ingenuous, insecure Edmund. The production's emotional force, however, is concentrated in its Lear, so much so that mere words, even Shakespeare's words, can't always contain it. Language suddenly becomes a snort, a growl, a breathless, angry pant or, at his final entrance, something more animal still. Sinden, has, it seems, read 'howl, howl, howl, howl' as a stage direction – and howls, howls, howls and howls again. It takes a real actor to make

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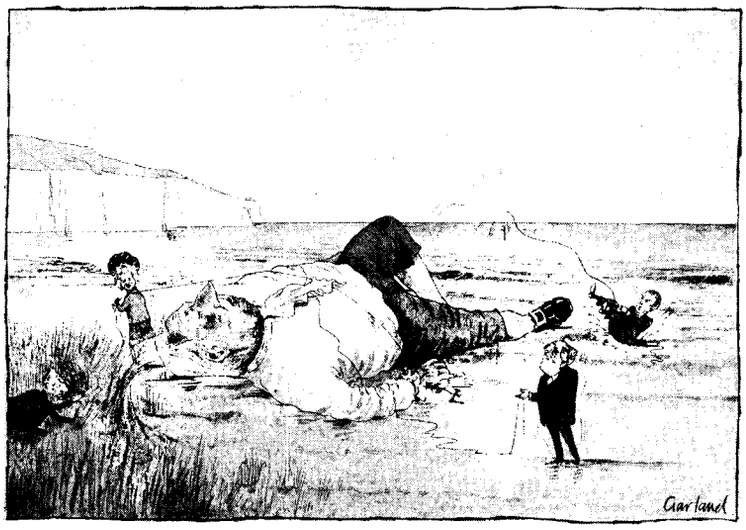

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you shut your eyes and look away for fear of intruding on a grief too awful and intimate to share; and anyone who came expecting, like me, to see a funny man out of his depth couldn't have been more wrong, because depth was precisely what he gave us.

In *The Masque of the Red Death*, Prince Prospero and his fellow-revellers closet themselves in a castellated abbey and spend their nights defying the plague that rages outside – a pretty reckless course of conduct for anyone unlucky enough to find himself in a Poe short story. Unsurprisingly, the whole gathering drops dead of the rather extreme form of measles that has somehow slipped through the portals. It's from this morbid morality that John Spurling has derived *While Rome Burns*, a strangely hack title for so elegant a jeremiad. His abbey is a sort of neo-Edwardian Eden, where people with names like Cokayne-Frith and Khaki Campbell have barracked themselves off from the rough world outside, to dance at government house, lay each others' wives, play Monopoly and cricket, and rabbit dreamily on about 'the sound of leather against willow' and that 'good scrap', the second world war. Death duly penetrates their cordon, this time in the form of a smiling gentleman with an M16, who sabotages the power supplies, defrosts the refrigerated food and finally snipes down the guests at an official jamboree. His name is Edgar Allan, but that is just Mr Spurling's little joke. If you imagine him with a Cuban accent or a black face, lurking somewhere inside Mr Smith's land-locked sanctum or Mr Vorster's seaside paradise, you'll be interpreting the metaphor more helpfully.

Better still, think of English imperviousness, that native myopia which convinces us we'll muddle through, however appalling the evidence to the contrary. Perhaps Mr Spurling should concentrate a little less on his blimps and upper-crust chauvinists, and offer a more representative sample of our island complacency. He might, for instance, show us more of the avant-garde theatre company which comes to strike socialist attitudes before the local fat-cats, an example of left-wing impotence and self-indulgence much emphasised in the opening scene and then, inexplicably, forgotten. But, in general, this is an intelligent and arresting contribution to the corpus of doom. It put me in mind of Howard Brenton's recent claim that playwrights of his 'school' cannot write a scene that doesn't contain some intimation of catastrophe. Every scene is coloured that way here, too, though Mr Spurling is surely too detached and ironic a writer to lay claim, or want to lay claim, to the regulation tie and blazer of Brenton House, Hare Hall or Barker High. If his voice is to be found in any single character in *While Rome Burns*, it's probably in the society wife who finds her cut-off life intolerably vapid, longs to grapple with the chaos outside, yet is repelled by the visiting guerrilla's crisp methods and ends by imploring him to kill her too: the restless, queasy, wavering stance of many of us nowadays.

The piece is capably directed by David Carson, and capably acted too; and that self-same adverb seems the right one to incant over the events at the Young Vic. Stoppard's *Hound* does, however, revive rather better than his *Glad*, an erstwhile radio play whimsically acknowledging our common slavery to speaking clocks, bus timetables and all the other apparatus in time's torture-chamber. But 'capable' is the last word for the version of Marivaux's *Dispute* briefly imported from France. Extraordinary, outrageous, megalomaniac and thrilling would severally or collectively be more apt. An urbane 18th-century debate about the relative inadequacies of men and women in love has become a feverish modern encounter-group, with both sexes flinging themselves about the moonlit stage in an ecstasy of instinct. The director, Patrice Chereau, has added material not in the original, which I find hard to take; but he's also given massive urgency to the emotional experiments in Marivaux's lab, and has done nothing to distort his main scientific conclusion, which is that women's infinite narcissism causes more conflict and misery than any male trait. After this and Planchon's almost equally presumptuous *Tartuffe*, I find myself awaiting the Théâtre National Populaire's next cross-Channel trip with some apprehension – but a lot more curiosity.

Films

John Coleman

Webbed Feat

The Spider's Stratagem *Academy Two*
London Film Festival *NFT*

Bernardo Bertolucci (and one is *not* thinking particularly, or even at all of *Last Tango*, however many hearts that chic shocker dances on in) is and ought to be good news: still young, but among that small group of Italian directors which takes to film as naturally as fish to water. From *La commare secca* on, made in 1962 when he was just 21, Bertolucci has been in his element – even if I disliked the result. Since then, we have had *Before the Revolution* (1964), strikingly ambitious and great in parts, *Partner* (1968), irrecoverably burdened by the awful Pierre Clémenti in a double role, *The Conformist* (1970), nearly flawless, and – *hélas* – that *Tango*. Now we are waiting for someone with the requisite gall and nous to put before us his much-touted *1900*, over five hours of celluloid and many claim his masterpiece. Meanwhile, the Academy does us a favour by filling in a crucial gap in the filmography. In the same year as *The Conformist*, Bertolucci had completed another movie, *The Spider's Stratagem* (or *Strategy*, as it was then translated): it was shown at the Venice Festival and at a subsequent season of Italian films at the NFT, after which it disappeared from view.

In the past, Dostoevsky and Moravia have furnished Bertolucci with material he has then transposed into his own idiom and I suppose it was inevitable that he would get round to a bit of Borges one day, in this case a short entitled 'Theme of the Traitor and the Hero' and set in Ireland in 1824. The Borgesian credential at least assures us that we can expect an enigma and a twist, if not a trap. But much more interesting than the tiny provenance of *The Spider's Stratagem* is how thoroughly the director (and part-scriptwriter – Edoardo de Gregorio and Marilu Pavolini are also credited) has made it his own. He seems at his happiest with a tormented hero, grand opera on the sound-track and preferably integrated into the plot, vast halls and capacious houses with lush gardens: as to the manor born, one might say of the last. Here, he disembarks his young Athos Magnani (Giulio Brogi) from a train at the small, 16th-century, seedy and colonnaded town of Tara (actually Sabbioneta, lying like a relic of the past between Mantua and Parma). After a mysterious opening, with old men standing or posing around like staring statues, he comes upon a real monument in the main square: to his father of the same name, b. 1900, d.1936. Grudgingly put up at a local hotel, Athos Jr sets off on a borrowed bike to visit his father's one-time mistress, Draifa (the imperishable Alida Valli). It is she who had noticed his picture in a Milan newspaper and sent for him to avenge a murder: for Athos Sr had been killed by Fascists some 30 years earlier, during a performance of *Rigoletto* at the town's opera house; and it is she who lives on in a splendid mansion garlanded with greenery, surrounded by luxuriant flowers.

This half-tamed nature has been prepared for in the brilliant animal paintings by Ligabue, reminiscent of Douanier Rousseau at his jungliest, that figure behind the credits. There is even, as I recall, a lion, and it is a couple of escaped lions from a visiting German circus that we see in flashback as the triggers for cowardice in Athos *père*: Draifa, looking exactly then as now, contemptuously dismisses him. It is no wonder that everyone in Tara recognises the revenant son so readily, since Giulio Brogi plays his father as well. Bertolucci deliberately compounds confusion by having the dead hero's three closest anti-Fascist friends equally unaltered in the few unannounced sequences that whisk us back in time. And there is a calm dosage of eccentricity, as when one of them takes the son on a loquacious, prodding-and-sniffing tour of his salamis or another gets him to help roll up a cinema-screen when a panorama of the countryside is suddenly exposed: one is kept guessing. Waking one

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morning, Athos *fils* gets a punch on the nose from a stranger; is locked in a stable, bundled away from a rich, suspect landowner's estate, may even have been drugged by Draifa. Fed up with so much ambiguity, frightened by the mounting hostility, he yet stumbles on the truth of that murder before preparing to leave Tara for good. The father had been a traitor and his assassins were his friends: better a false martyrdom than an honest exposure. The secret will stay safe. Then, at the last minute, the film locks in on itself. At the station, a voice announces the train will be 30 minutes late, then 35. Athos stares down at the sleepers, as overgrown as Draifa's wild garden. It is not a profound trick, but it leaves one on a pleasant question-mark: lulled on a web, acquiescent for once about being gobbled up by a joke-spider.

More interim LFF jottings: were I a distributor, which heaven forfend, my thoughts would be turning away from some of the more celebrated names (Losey, Widerberg, Bryan Forbes, Jiri Menzel, for instance, all below par on their festival showings) and towards less fanfared items. The Italian animator Bruno Bozzetto's *Allegro Non Troppo* is a full stretch of generally inspired surrealism, mixing live-action and cartoon sequences. Some batty and battered-looking old ladies are herded from a cage and into a truck: they turn up sprucely enough as a disaster-prone orchestra. A fellow is unchained from a wall and is soon in evening dress, drawing away like mad on a stage. The ladies scrape and bang and his sketches become the post-Freudian mock-*Fantasia* episodes, during which Debussy, Dvorak, Ravel, Sibelius, Vivaldi and Stravinsky are put through a miraculous wringer. If not too late, TV should grab this for Xmas. The Polish Janusz Majewski's *Hotel Pacific*, made with a Czech-Polish cast, is taken from a Thirties best-seller and none the worse for that: we follow the progress of a youth from dishwasher to waiter and the behind-the-scenes activity is beautifully, if conventionally, conveyed. Everyone's there, from recalcitrant patrons to bullying staff: and the lad makes a moral decision at the close – enough to send all home in a warm glow.

Chills, rather, are to be caught from two longish American shorts, both documentaries (a category in which this 20th festival has starred): Richard Cohen's *Hurry Tomorrow* and Walter F. Parkes and Keith F. Critchlow's *The California Reich*. The first quite glares at the Metropolitan State Hospital, Cal., whither nervously broken-down men and women are dispatched by their kin to recuperate. The treatment would appear to consist largely of overdoses of potentially dangerous drugs: a psychiatrist spouts dangerous fatuities at the camera: a black inmate jigs scattily about, extemporising a terrible doggerel song about it all. The second centres on the renaissance of a Hitler-worshipping group. To these sound citizens, impartially against 'Jews and niggers', a loaded gun is a man's best friend. Perhaps the most scary moment in a catalogue of everyday awfulnesses comes when a housewife amiably explains how she iced and decorated her swastika'd cake.

Television

Ian Hamilton

One-Man Plan

Single Mind is the rather silly title of a promising new series that is being given a trial run on BBC-2. In fact, the programme has nothing to do with obsession, or devotion to duty, or stupidity or whatever else is suggested by the notion of the single mind. It simply invites each week one speaker at a time to give his essay-length ruminations on some burning topic of the day. Having delivered, the thinkers (whose 'only qualification for Single-Mindedness, capital S, is excellence in their own fields') are then grilled by a quartet of interested parties. Not exactly what you'd call a singular idea, but the show does have some claim to unusualness in being ready to tackle complicated, non-glamourous subjects in detail and with vigour.

The first episode starred Hugh Trevor-Roper (placed, in an attitude of fond unease, next to a large screen starring Hugh Trevor-Roper) and it was his task to 'turn the light, and the prejudices, of a powerful single mind' onto the shortcomings of the devolution Bill. His prejudices comfortably enjoyed the upper hand; much of his time, and certainly most of his vitality, were spent railing against the bill's 'tainted origins'. The whole thing, he thinks, began with Labour's fear in 1974 that they were going to lose their vital Scots seats to the Nats. The Scots Labour Party wasn't bothered about devolution:

> It was a few English Labour politicians who forced those Scots to change their tune. It was Transport House in London which obliged the Scottish Executive to reconvene for a special meeting so that the block votes of the great unions so easily bought by concessions in other fields could overpower opposition and reverse the already recorded vote; and it was the same English politicians who put pressure on the Scotsman Mr Ross to change his mind and toe the line. Thus even inside the Labour Party, the Bill had no Scottish origins. It was imposed from England.

The drift of the rhetoric will be clear. What wasn't quite so clear from Trevor-Roper's speech, or from the questioning afterwards, was how he reconciled his various objections to the Bill. The Scots, he said, are already over-represented at Westminster, and it is quite wrong therefore to give them their own Assembly in Edinburgh. The Assembly, though, won't have any real weight; it will merely provide the Scots with 'a talking-shop in which agitators can inflame grievances'. Is the Bill therefore, we reflect, giving them too little or too much? Similarly, if the whole devolution enterprise can be written off as a neat Labour strategy aimed at damaging the SNP, why wasn't Transport House cunning enough to see that it

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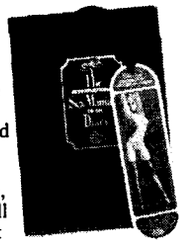

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would also be 'a gift to the Scottish Nationalists'? Lurking around somewhere was a Trevor-Roper plan for Scotland, but the real focus of his single, and at times distempered, mind was the Wilson administration, under which 'the institutions of our country were used or abused as never before for party, even personal convenience'.

Never before? Rather more exactness prevailed in *Single Mind*'s second episode, in which Lord Devlin argued that the costliness of our legal procedures should be given a good looking over. Do we really need the adversary system of champion confronting champion in court? Do trials need to take so long? The legal system as it stands was created for the well-to-do; Legal Aid has turned it into a social service: 'But we are leaving it as a restaurant service and trying to squeeze in more tables when we ought to be providing cafeterias.' Devlin's proposals were for a European-style conference room justice, with lots of written evidence, no verbose barristers and snoozing judges, and only very occasional personal appearances from witnesses. Taking umbrage, the barrister among his panel of questioners wanted to know how, if you couldn't see a man, you could tell if he was lying? Good question and Devlin rather ducked it by insisting that he was limiting his proposed reforms to civil litigation; crooks, it seems, still need their champions. At the end of his speech, Devlin allowed himself a flicker of apocalypse: 'we may get unstuck', he warned,

> in our legal system in the middle of what is in truth a slow social revolution. In the next decade or so there is bound to be some instability. It is in unstable times that the smooth working of the law becomes so important. Grievances uncured can so easily lead to social unrest.

He made it sound pretty urgent that we get down to fixing things. A few minutes later, though, he was wearily admitting that, though instability strikes quickly, law reform takes time. It will need at least 30 years to introduce the correct system for dealing with whatever trouble is in store for us in ten years' time.

'Well, this is a very good read, this book', 'Absolutely fascinating book', 'It's elliptical, not to say over-condensed'; the atmosphere of *Read All About It* (BBC-1) is that of a none-too-spontaneous cocktail party, and it can be watched with an indulgent sneer. It sells books, the argument runs, and it makes literary types seem a bit glamorous, so who cares if most of what is said on it is froth? Well, not me, although I must say that a programme of this kind is likely to be at its best if it remains down-market. That's to say, it didn't seem all that Good for Literature to have a serious writer like Ian MacEwan on the show just to ask him fatuous questions about 'unpleasantness' of his subject matter. In the two minutes or so available, MacEwan tried to make some kind of answer and his questioners (being 'serious' themselves) tried not to press too hard, but somehow everyone managed to look faintly demeaned. At the moment, it seems to me the show is trying to pack too much in and has perhaps become popular enough to be able to ditch some of its most trifling items and build up the brainpower. Or would that mean instant removal to BBC-2?

Sermons

Julian Barnes

Any Answers

Willed paradox has always lain at the heart of Malcolm Muggeridge's intellectual stance. 'How bizarre it is . . .', 'how wonderfully ironic to behold . . .', 'little did they appreciate at the time . . .' – such are the lead-ins both to his sentences and to his mind. Even his God is, *inter alia*, the Supreme Ironist, dropping wry hints with an Almighty twinkle. So it is fittingly ironic to behold in Mr Muggeridge himself, over the past dozen years, the spectacle of the paradox made flesh. How bizarre to see the sceptic fallen among believers: the intelligent man driven into anti-intellectualism and gibes at 'bearded students'; the most skilled telly-performer of his generation deriding the fantasies of the media and yet continuing to perform; the clown, turned saint, yet unable quite to put off his former garb. In the old days, when he was provocative, he was taken seriously; now, when most he wishes to be taken seriously, he has become merely a *provocateur*. The truth is that, puckish, caustic and delightful as he still remains, he has become a turn. One visits him for the polemic, for the neo-Augustan phrasing, for the elegant denigration of the earlier, fallen Muggeridge; above all, to witness the curious destiny of rationalism's most celebrated apostate.

Mr Muggeridge has currently been giving this year's London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity at All Souls, Langham Place. Speaking on 'Christ and the Media' from a place so subversively close to the BBC, the fireside Savonarola has, understandably, been packing them in. Broadly, his charge against the media, and especially TV, is that while they comprise the greatest single influence in society today, they wield their power with a complete lack of moral and spiritual guidelines; neither is there any force within the media capable of protecting us from them. Television, launched under Reith, the ferocious moralist and cradle Calvinist, has become (along with nuclear weapons and the contraceptive pill) one of the three apocalyptic inventions of our age. It peddles a brand of fantasy – be it ketchup blood, plastic grass, or, most insidiously, newsack – which transposes good and evil and seduces us from 'the reality of Christ'. In Mr Muggeridge himself it induces a series of colourful and instructive nightmares. He regularly dreams, for instance, of surviving a nuclear holocaust and finding himself, deep underground in a BBC studio, on the panel of *Any Questions*. Trapped, he is forced to listen to a moustachioed peeress advocating that birth pills be handed out to girls at breakfast time; and he wakes up screaming. If the dream tells us little about the BBC, it tells us a lot about the dreamer, not least in the way it catches the essential glee of his gloom.

The parabolic memories and the preacher's metaphors lead up to perkily imagined questions. What will future archaeologists make of us when they unearth the Dead Sea Videotapes? (Answer: a self-destructive civilisation obsessed with violence, sex, abortion, euthanasia, consumerism and higher education.) What would Jesus have said to the Fourth Temptation, an offer from Lucius Gradus of a prime time slot, networked throughout the Roman Empire, with no commercial breaks? He would, of course, have rejected it.

The answer to the Muggeridgean thesis is, of course, to get down to specifics. Naturally the media can lie, shots can be faked, scenes set up; but how often? Mr Muggeridge rarely mentions particular programmes. His examples are mostly of commercials, extreme American telly tricks, or make-up techniques (witch-hazel was kept constantly at hand for Nixon's face in the 1972 campaign, as sweat is held to undermine sincerity). The only statistic offered came in two forms: the London Lectures handout stated that the average adult in Britain spends 8 years of his life watching television; in Mr Muggeridge's version, the figure was miraculously expanded, like the loaves and fishes, to 12 years. Again, his method of discrediting the idea of news reporting is to foist his own *mea culpa* on the profession at large. He recalled that when he was in Egypt he managed, though speaking no Arabic, to send back reports acceptable to the *Manchester Guardian* and its readers, merely by churning out bromides. Implication: all news can be, and is, made up in the local wine-bar. Refutation, brief and conclusive, from the evening's chairman, Sir Charles Curran: 'It is possible to collect news in a better way.'

Still, by the end of the lectures, many were clamouring to know how therefore they might be saved. Christian media-men who asked worriedly about their position were told, rather bleakly, that they had a hard row to hoe, though with God of course, all things were possible: for instance, Mr Muggeridge's own interview with Mother Teresa succeeded, he believed, in transcending the medium. More viewers were told they could follow the lecturer's example and simply dispose of their sets, as he had done after watching the 'squalid' series, *The Family*: 'I always say I've had my aerials removed and feel much better for it – it's the moral equivalent of a prostate operation.'

For non-believers, the warm feeling was to be obtained in a rather more ironical fashion. After an hour hearing about the collapse of Western civilisation, with full evocations of Nero's Rome, and the media compared successively to Frankenstein's monster and the Golden Calf, if when you come out the only news is 6p on a pound of cheese, it makes you feel pretty chipper. After Mr Muggeridge's first blast, I waited for a bus opposite All Souls, outside the Regent Theatre. 'Let My People Come' was playing and, as I stood there, a male member of the cast, dressed in bra, panties, garter-belt and black stockings, camped across the foyer, feather boa flying, to buy himself a packet of cigarettes. Nobody in the bus queue turned a hair. How wonderfully ironic, I reflected; and then, how reassuring.

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Architecture

Andrew Saint

Stranded

Everybody knows that the South Bank has been, in planning terms, a flop. Each new fancy public building has lengthened by one more ominous link a concrete *cordon sanitaire* barring the way to South London, drab, heavy-handed, bare, without colour, charm or significant planting, a priceless monument to officially subsidised architecture and culture. All but complete between Westminster and Waterloo Bridges, it is now creeping onwards towards Blackfriars, where the King's Reach development is nearly finished. Though partly residential, neither King's Reach nor the modicum of council housing intended close to the National Theatre can now salvage much of the mess that has been made of these northern fringes of Southwark and Lambeth.

Yet luckily the damage is not too deep. The riverside cordon acts also as a kind of cultural sponge absorbing the middle classes, who rarely venture beyond except to use Waterloo Station or to hurry on to the wastes of the Elephant and the southern suburbs beyond. Much of the district close to Waterloo is therefore startlingly private territory, where the fabric of the old South Bank still flourishes, and with it traditional patterns of living. Seventy years ago, this community was much more extensive. In the hinterland between the three bridges of Westminster, Waterloo and Blackfriars ran a network of neat early 19th-century streets connecting houses, wharves, builders' yards, small manufactories and all the grubby *impedimenta* of a thriving proletarian population. County Hall, begun in 1909, was the first maior encroachment. Since then, the community has been slowly rolled back. Between Waterloo and Westminster Bridges the decimation was complete by the time of the Festival of Britain, but towards Blackfriars there was plenty of resistance until the late Sixties. In Stamford Street indeed, according to an aged inhabitant, 'the genelmen from acrawss the river used to keep their gay ladies'. If they ever existed, they have gone now and Stamford Street has given up the ghost. Yet a few streets away, round The Cut, the community is as vigorous as ever. Now that the Old Vic is no more, few visitors linger in The Cut. But an hour or two spent hereabouts would teach them more about architecture and culture than a dozen visits to the ramifying South Bank Complex could ever do.

The story of the 'gay ladies' came from a stout but imaginative party in Roupell Street, clad in a stiff straw hat and wheeling a stiff straw basket at a stately pace behind her. And Roupell Street with its neighbours Theed and Whittlesey Streets is as good a place as any to savour the resilience of South London. Here, just beneath the down platforms of the through section of Waterloo, stand three narrow streets of brick houses of the 1820s. Roupell Street is the best of them. Gable-ends to the front and a mere two storeys in height, the houses zigzag merrily along for 100 yards and more, each corner interrupted by a Dickensian shopfront. The most elegant of the shopfronts (inscribed *Phoebe, Artistic Florist – Wreathes and Crosses Made to Order*) has been boarded up and some of the old chimneypots on the back extensions lean precariously; but the future of these streets is relatively assured. Though the estate, intact until about 1960, has changed hands several times since, the process of selling freeholds was well under way by the time that it got lodged in the gullet of Town and Country Properties; so the developers could do little with it and promptly spewed it forth. The price has been some inevitable gentrification, but for the time being this has not gone too far. The present mix of modest middle-class freeholds and controlled working-class tenancies is ideal, though it will hardly last for long.

Public rather than private housing, however, is what really distinguishes the district. No area of London displays such a variety of working-class housing as the segment between Blackfriars and Waterloo Roads. Most of this lies south of The Cut, which along with the thriving market of Lower Marsh further west offers the only decent shopping within a wide radius. Visually, The Cut has little to boast about except the Old Vic (of which more later). But beyond it lies a set of surprises. The first is sprung by the Church Commissioners, of all unlikely people. Their estate begins with Mitre Road, a banal thoroughfare flanked by unlovely three-storey flats of the 1880s, with the inevitable concrete detailing of Victorian philanthropic housing. Yet behind, along Ufford Street, runs a picturesque range of Edwardian cottages in two tones of brick, with little lean-to Kate Greenaway porches and the occasional roughcast gable. The same contrast, writ large, recurs further south, closer to St George's Circus, and this time the explanation for the change is clear: the turn-of-the-century influence of the famous Architect's Department of the early LCC. Webber Row boasts five of their 'high rises' of 1902-06, long blocks end-on to the street, humanised by simple, elegant handling in the manner of Philip Webb – the hallmark of early LCC work. The surprise here is that they back directly on to one of the earliest and largest Peabody Estates, facing Blackfriars Road and dating from 1871. It is comprised of clodhopping stock-brick four-storey buildings sited round courtyards and entered through giant arches, which are now painted in strident colours to impart some post-philanthropic cheer. The graphic contrast between sober Peabody Square and smart Webber Row is mirrored in the nomenclature. Peabody tenants live candidly in (for instance) 'Block U', council dwellers in 'Delarch Buildings' or, by courtesy of the recent snobbish upgradings imposed on such estates, in 'Dauncy House'. Whether the inhabitants feel so strongly about all these niceties of name and appearance is a moot point. With public housing, the layout and extent of the accommodation have always been the primary thing, and there is precious little difference in plan or sanitation between a Peabody 'block' of the 1870s and an LCC 'building' of the 1900s.

This review of corporate housing-types can be completed by a detour behind the east side of the Blackfriars Road. The road itself has little now to offer except a comic juxtaposition of the Old King's Head and the far bigger and boozier Sons of Temperance Friendly Society, doing their best not to eye each other across Surrey Row. Close by, a smaller and more sympathetic pair of early LCC 'buildings', all chimneybreasts and narrow windows, lies tucked away in Rushworth Street. Called 'Ripley' and 'Merrow' in nostalgic period affection for the villages of Surrey, they house just 24 families, an ideal size for council tenements. Then in Pocock Street comes Pakeman House, a long expensive-looking effort of 1938 by the City Corporation in claret bricks, and to the north of this one of the much-criticised Borough of Southwark's most successful postwar schemes, Nelson Square. The old square has been rebuilt informally and to varying height, sometimes as much as 12 storeys. The buildings, plain and sensible, have now reached maturity, and go so well with the rose garden and the six splendid planes shading the central playground that one scarcely laments the four forlorn Regency houses still standing in a corner.

Finally, a word on the Old Vic, which the tide of culture has left so sadly stranded. As one of London's oldest (and most often jilted) theatres, going back to 1816, it is used to these kinds of ups-and-downs. In 1850 Kingsley lamented its decline in *Alton Locke* and commented on 'the beggary and rascality of London . . . pouring in to their low amusement from the neighbouring gin-palaces and thieves' cellars'. Yet it was resurrected as a 'coffee music hall' in 1880, and Emma Cons could be found there holding classes for Lambeth boys in a disused dressing room. So the Old Vic has seen a fair variety of uses. Now there are no firm plans for its future, and a serious scheme is needed for both its structure and its character. Let us hope that when the scheme matures it will be one that breaks the *cordon sanitaire* and incorporates something of what Kingsley saw as well as what Emma Cons strove for. Bourgeois culture has, after all, taken much from the local community, and it is high time something was returned.

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Weekend Competition

No 2441 **Set by Spiro Keats**

Try this:

As I was going to St Pauls
A lady grabbed me by the elbow

Or this:

There was an old farmer who sat on a rick,
Laughing and waving his big hairy fist
At the sailors, etc, etc.

Now: there will be double prizes (and lots of space) in our bumper Christmas issue for 16-line entries of the same sort of thing. A big effort, please – show me what you can do. Entries by 16 December.

No 2438 **Set by Pat Blackford**

We wanted *Confessions of a Book Reviewer, Adventures of Crossword Compiler*, etc.

Report **by Little Keith**

I was doodling at my vast desk, up here in the comp complex, when one of my people flashed through from the outer office to say that the Editor was on his way up the stairs. In he came, with a kind of desperate nonchalance in his stride. 'More filth?' he asked abruptly. 'I'm afraid so, Tony,' I murmured. 'Is it . . . very disgusting?' he said, and I thought I saw a wild gleam of hope in his eyes. 'Perfectly revolting,' I replied, 'from the first word to the last.' The Editor nodded. 'I see. How much are you paying these people?' 'I suppose about, oh, £6 each.' 'Well, it can't be helped now. Oh dear.' Then I hit him with 2441.

Woke early, but lay bedbound in a tingling ecstasy of expectation wondering whether a new book parcel from the *Catholic Clarion* could yet have arrived. Rose at Terce to find it had! 798 pages on *Whither Chastity*? Obviously a spiffing good read – if one could ever get round to it. As it was, spent rest of morning sniffing intoxicatingly aromatic glue with which parcel string impregnated and getting higher than Hinsley as a result. Also quite a buzz from delicious book-paper odour. Why is it most books smell better than they read? Passed afternoon in trancedly psychedelic indecision as to precise point at which to penetrate volume's virginity for sample para. Eventually banged it at Page 666 and read fully eight lines. Then spent all of five minutes dictating 900-word review for Miss Maculate to type up in morning. Retired utterly exhausted at Vespers with crate of communion wine. *Q*: Can I possibly survive this insane pace and stress? ROBIN RAVENSBOURNE

One thing about knocking out these Confessions books, it certainly helps you pull the birds. An ad in the local paper – 'Artist seeks uplifting model' – and you're like a pig in clover. 'Hullo, I'm Denise.' 'Of course you are, dear,' I say, 'now over by the fruit and veg and get 'em off. I want to immortalize you in warm print.' 'Cheeky!' 'No, just the ordinary pose, love.' I sit at my typewriter. *She had charleys as smooth as aubergines surmounted by nipples like loganberries grown under glass.* Well, with the drought this year, things have been getting a bit strained. 'And what do you think of this?' I ask, flashing her the pork chopper. 'Ooooh, it's like . . . a gate-post!' 'That'll do. Over here now.' We fuse into one another. She is as tight as a well-drawn contract. 'What's it like?' I ask, reaching for my notebook. 'Knocks spots off John Braine,' she quips.

PADDY BEESLEY

'Shall I show you my Queen's Opening again?' She giggled. I was exhausted. The worst of reporting these international tournaments, I thought, is the groupies. There are simply far too many of them, wanting to take a plaster cast of your rook. Fischky, the Grand Master, was making love to 23 of them simultaneously, blindfolded of course, but there were still too many. She rolled over, the pattern on her bottom revealing the location of the stalemate problem I had set up hours ago and then unaccountably lost. 'That's the game I've *been looking for!*' '*As the queen said to the* bishop,' she cackled. MORAY MCGOWAN

. . . Shy Sally from Uttoxeter, no longer a maiden after my tip came up for her at Doncaster. I had followed her for weeks, and was finally rewarded. She started slowly, then stretched out, tail threshing, and came like a thunderbolt, finishing a good length up, and could have carried on indefinitely under the weight. I got in at 5 to 1. She finished at 5 to 2. Another filly in my notebook was French Jessie, who took on all comers as a novice, earning a sizeable sum with her places. She liked the flat, but get her over hurdles with the sun on her back, and madamoiselle was game for anything; Most bookies were laying her at Cheltenham. Newcomer Ascot Connie cost me plenty, but I had a feeling this goodlooker would come good. I was on her at a Bath meeting, when she duly obliged. What a jumper! Ah well! Back to racing . . .

PERRY HAMILTON

Tony Miles

Chess

No 10 **October Problems**

The winner of the October problem series is E. Allan of Edinburgh. Congratulations. £20 is on its way. Joint runners-up are A. J. Sobey of Hindhead and R. Bradley of Portsmouth who receive £10 each. There are also four consolation awards of £2.50 for H. Garfath of Croydon, J. Kelly of Mauritius, R. Smith of Kingston, Surrey and G. Abrahams of Liverpool. I must confess that some of the positions gave rise to more interesting analysis than I had anticipated when setting them. I should mention that in giving the solutions to the more complicated problems space only permitted the main variation(s). I can remedy that now.

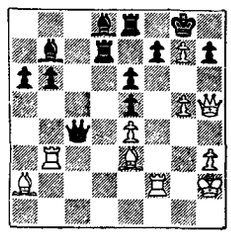
Problem 1: r5k1/1bp2p2/p4qpp/1pbr3n/4QP2/1BP2N1P/PP4PK/R1B1R3.
1. . . . R-Q7 is almost forced. After 2. Q-K5 both 2. . . R x P ch; 3 K x R, Q-R5 (and if 4. B x P ch, K x B; 5. Q-K6 ch, K-B1) and 2. . . . B x N; 3. B x R, Q-R5 win. The other line which I did not give is 2. Q-K8 ch, R x Q; 3. R x R ch, K-N2; 4. B x R, B x N; 5. P x B, Q-R5; 6. B-K1, B-B7! winning. So, as the more thorough analysts saw, white's best is 2. B x R.

Problem 2 was very straightforward.

Problem 3: 6k1/5p2/3p1P2/p2P2K1/1pPP3P/1P6/P7/8.
Apart from the given solution white can also force a winning Q + P ending by playing P-R5 and then making a timely run to the Q-side with his king e.g. 1. K-R6, K-R1; 2. P-R5, K-N1; 3. K-N5, K-R2; 4. K-N4, K-R3; 5. K-R4, K-R2; 6. K-N5, K-N1; 7. K-B4, K-R2; 8. K-K3 etc.

Having received so many correct solutions to the first three I decided to make four and five harder to avoid having 30 prizewinners. Possibly I overdid it.

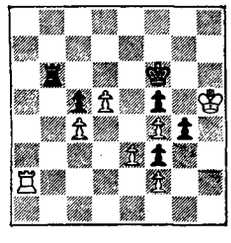
Problem 4 (see diagram) produced much fascinating analysis and was remarkable for the number and variety of incorrect solutions. By far the most popular of these was 1. P-N6, BP x P; 2. B-R6 and now if (a) 2. . . . B-K2 (or Q-B4); 3. Q or R(N3)-KB3, or (b) 2. . . . R-KB2; 3. R x R, Q-B7 ch; 4. K-N3, K x R; 5. Q-B3 ch winning but (c) 2. . . . R x P! and white has no good continuation. 3. B x R, P x Q; 4. R-N3 'winning' was suggested by some. A nice idea (e.g. 4. . . . Q x P? 5. B x P ch, R x B; 6. R-B8 mate), but unfortunately 4. . . . B-R5! leaves black several pawns up. Another favourite 'solution' was 1. R x BP, R x R; 2. P-N6, R x P; 3. P x P ch, R x P; 4. Q x R(K8) ch, K-N2; 5. B-B2 intending R-N3 ch. This has two 'holes'. First, after 1. R x BP, Q x P I see no win, and secondly, much more embarrassingly, after 1. R x BP, R x R; 2. P-N6, Q-B7 ch! 3. K-N3 (or N1), R x P! or 3. K-R1, B x P ch. There were many other tries, but none convincing. Perhaps some were put off by the fact that my solution results in an ending which is not obviously overwhelming, but should, I think, be winning.



Problem 5 caused me some difficulty when I first saw it during the following game:

White: A. Filipowicz. Black: A. J. Miles.
1. P-K4, P-QB4; 2. N-KB3, P-K3; 3. P-Q4, P x P; 4. N x P, P-QR3; 5. P-QB4, N-KB3; 6. N-QB3, B-N5; 7. B-Q3, Q-B2; 8. 0-0, N-B3; 9. B-B2, N-K4; 10. P-B4, N x BP; 11. P-K5, B x N; 12. P x N, N x P; 13. B x N, B x B; 14. R-N1, Q-N3! (14. . . . B x N ch is problem 6!) **15. R x B, Q x R; 16. P x P, R-KN1; 17. R-B3, R x P; 18. R-QN3, Q x P; 19. Q-K1!** Up to this point I had felt confident that my extra material would triumph. Now I became worried. Whilst it is difficult to pinpoint a real white threat Q-K5 and Q-B3 are dangerous and in some cases P-KN3 is strong since the black pieces do not co-ordinate at all. It seemed to me that to develop fluently I needed to fianchetto my B so first I looked at the natural 1. . . . P-N4 but 2. Q-K5 or 2. B-K4. Then 1. . . . P-N3. but 2. B-K4!, R-R2 (or R-N1; 3. Q-B3); 3. Q-B3, B-N2 (recommended by several); 4. B x B, R x B; 5. Q-B8 ch, K-K2; 6. N-B5 ch! (overlooked by several), P x N (6. . . . K-B3? 7. Q-B3 ch! mates); 7. R-K3 ch with at least a draw. I briefly examined 1. . . . P-B4?! to prevent B-K4 but 2. Q-B3 (2. Q-K5, K-B2 may be OK), K-B2; 3. N x BP!, P x N; 4. R-N6! looked nasty. Soon I returned to 1. . . . P-N3 but it took almost an hour to find the complete solution: **19. . . . P-N3!** Controls some black squares! Now 20. R x P?, Q-Q4! or 20. Q-K5 (or B3), Q-R4!; 21. Q x R??, Q-K8 mate. **So 20. B-K4, P-Q4!** (*giving black room to breathe. If* 20. . . . R-R2 (or N1); 21. Q-B3 again); **21. B x QP, R-R2!; 22. Q-B3.** 22. Q-K5 is also met by the spectacular 22. . . . R-B2!! **22. . . . R-B2!** Seizing the initiative if 23. Q x R, Q-R8 ch. Now white, very short of time, collapses. **23. B-B6 ch, B-Q2; 24. N x P, R x P ch; 25. B x R, R x Q; Resigns.**

Problem 10:
Black to play. How should game go? Entries to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 15 December.



Solution to Problem 8:
1. . . . R x P!; 2. N-B3, (if 2. Q or R x R, Q-B8 ch; or 2. Q-K1, R x R; 3. Q x R, Q-B8 ch;) **R (K1) x R; Resigns.**

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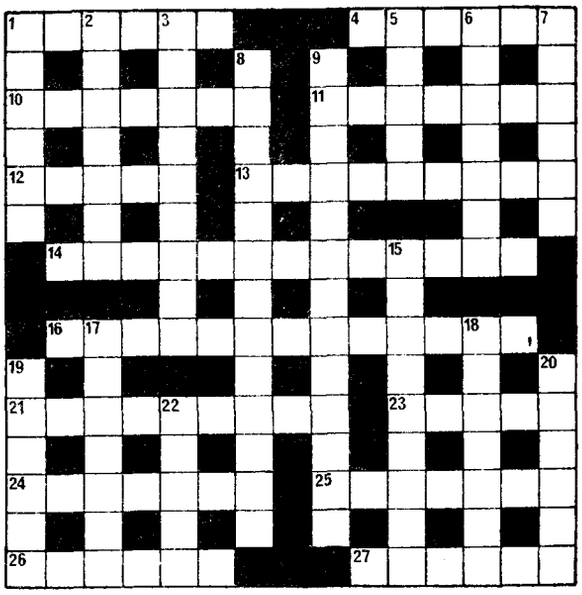
Weekend Crossword 1193

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1193, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 14 Dec.



ACROSS

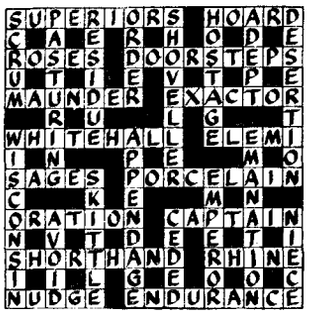
1. Make a change in my holding a dog back (6).
4. Put back part of the circle for the boxes (6).
10. Dig up in Peru near the Inca ruins (7).
11. His were the glittering prizes, but something worthless to a backward girl (7).
12. Half of them got to know an insect (5).
13. Get new idea about sun being in the red (9).
14. Private verses are obscure but they keep things fresh (13).
16. People as a whole are far from private in two senses (7, 6).
21. Mail somewhere in Africa after fresh arrival? (9).
23. Make a speech in wooing the elector at every opportunity (5).
24. Quivering a lot more strangely (7).
25. Little room exists in Germany for a musician (7).
26. Work of literature for a child to score (6).
27. One of those who complain when a sermon is broadcast (6).

DOWN

1. The cat is the one who meditates about nothing (6).
2. One who has visions is gloomy about me (7).
3. Sample of a setter being wrong (9).
5. Be loathsome but the reverse of an outcast (5).
6. Bar for hangers-on (7).
7. 'I —— thee, Mantovano' (Tennyson) (6).
8. A follow-up of similar responses makes New China certain about nothing (5, 8).
9. Where to call last wrongly before a friend with a good card (7, 6).
15. The confusion of spending half one's life in a strange big room (9).
17. He worked on day and night (7).
18. 'No —— priest shall tithe or toll in our dominions' *(K. John)* (7).
19. Takes it out of the good in backward classes (6).
20. Post for landlady? (6).
22. One reduced to tears in going back with award (5).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1191



Prizewinners to No 1191

A. J. Goldfinch (London W13)
A. March (Oegstgeest)
J. A. Perkins (Wootton)

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Continued from p. 824

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol. 92 No. 2385

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Theatres

ALMOST FREE THEATRE, 9 Rupert Street, W1. 01-485 6224. Opened 22 Nov. 'The Swing' by Edward Bond. 1.15 daily.

HAMPSTEAD THEATRE, 722 9301. 'A Seventh Man' by Adrian Mitchell. Evgs 8.0, Sat. 5 & 8. Till Sat. only. 'Dusa, Fish, Stas & Vi', a new play by Pam Gems. Previews from 6 Dec. 8 p.m. Opens 8 Dec. 7 p.m. Subs evgs 8 p.m.

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VANBRUGH THEATRE CLUB. 9-12 Dec. Eleanor & Herbert Farjeon's enchanting musical 'The Two Bouquets'. Details RADA, 62 Gower St, WC1. 01-637 7076.

Concerts

CONCERT FOR WOW: Lalita Ubhayakar, renowned Indian singer, in concert for War on Want, Queen Mary Hall, Gt Russell St, (nr Tottenham Ct Rd tube). Sat. 11 Dec. 6.30. Tickets 75p-£4 at door or phone 609 0211.

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Protection of Human Rights in the UK

Human Rights Day Lecture

by Sir Leslie Scarman

Chair: Lord Avebury

5.30 p.m. Fri. 10 Dec.

Commonwealth Hall, 16/20 Craven Street, WC2. Admission free.

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